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यस्यज्ञानदयासिन्धोरगाधस्यनघागुणाः ।
सेव्यतामोक्षयोधीराः स श्रिये चामृताय च ॥

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Red Lotus

(SRI AUROBINDO'S CONSCIOUSNESS)

That living' Lotus, petal by petal unfolding,
Which through the mists of this *avidya* looms,
Vicegerent of the Sun, nowise withholding
The light we lack in *Maya's* nether glooms.

When spirit-sense to the last high peak gyring
Finds all Thy mountain-bud aflame with rose—
Touched by the eager hues of Dawn's aspiring—
What raptured Silence watches Thee unclose!

Then the vast span of those Truth-petals reaching
To the utmost arc of Being's finitude
With vibrant answer to dark's wan beseeching
Transforms a world, from Thy grave beauty hued.

O puissant heart amidst whose raptured shrining
A nameless Love is garbed in Name's disguise,
Last metronome to mortal things assigning
A fadeless rhythm wrung from Dawn's echoing skies.

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo

All heaven's secrecy lit to one face
Crowning with calm the body's blinded cry—
A soul of upright splendour like the noon!

But only shadowless love can breathe this pure
Sun-blossom fragrant with eternity—
Eagles of rapture lifting, flickerless,
A golden trance wide-winged on golden air.

AMAL KIRAN*

Sri Aurobindo

Knowing thee once, do I not know the Truth
However fragmentary? For though I may
Still fail to glimpse thy New Dawn which can soothe
My famished eyes with His unsullied Day,

Yet once thou mak'st my half-lit consciousness
A medium of thy fire-winged melody,
Thy Sun that sees will flash to me thy Grace,
The harbinger of His white harmony.

For thou hast reached what still eludes our grasp :
Immortal life which outmanoeuvres death
By taking faded petals in its clasp
To resurrect in Beauty's blooms which breathe

Of rhythms yet unsurmised. O Fashioner
Of new moulds with materials of old!
Thou keepst thy vigil to invoke the far
Wisdom of stars to Folly manifold.

In the abyss of anguish, when one sighs
For loss irreparable, thou alone
Healst the bereaved with message of thy skies
Which we, through blindness, bypass and disown.

Transgressing limits where the world cries halt
Thou movest on—no terrors make thee quail,
Thou hast attained what never is at fault:
The Sun of suns no cloud can countervail.

What we dream of on earth thou bringest down
From zones beyond our boldest fancy's flight,
Who once knows thy compassion has, friend, known:
'Tis not a myth that Love is one with Light.

DILIP

Our Ideal

Our ideal—the ideal of Sri Aurobindo—we may say without much ado, is to divinise the human, immortalise the mortal, spiritualise the material. Is the ideal possible? Is it practicable? Our task will be precisely, first of all, to show that it is possible, next that it is probable and finally that it is inevitable.

Now to the first question. It is usually contended that the ideal is an impossibility, a chimera, since it involves on the face of it a self-contradiction. For is not divinity the very opposite of humanity, immortality that of mortality and Matter that of the Spirit? These pairs, all of them, are formed of two mutually exclusive terms. This is what Mayavada posits. But need it be necessarily and inevitably so? What is affirmed is after all a postulate and one can start from other postulates as well. The truth, of course, is that all theories or views of existence are centrally formulations of an experience; and each experience has its own postulate.

To begin with, we refuse to admit or recognise that there is or is bound to be a contradiction or opposition between matter and spirit, between body and soul or between the human and the divine. We start with an experience, a realisation which declares the essential unity and identity of the duality. That is the first thing that has to be posited first clear and nett. The question next arises how the two are one and identical; this demands some clarification. For is it meant that they are one and the same in the sense that Zeus and Jupiter are the same or that water and H_2O are the same? Apart from any barren theorising, is it not a universal and eternal and invariable experience that to attain to the Divine one must leave behind the human, to become the immortal one must cease to be a mortal and to live in the Spirit one has to deny Matter? The

real answer, however, is that it is so and it is not so. The dilemma is not so trenchant as it has been made out to be.

To the regard of one line of experience, Matter seems opposed to Spirit only so far as the actual and outer formulation of Matter is concerned: even then the opposition is only apparent and relative. This is the very crux of the problem. For, to such a regard Spirit becomes matter also, it is also Matter—*annam brahma eva*. Spirit is consciousness (chit); and Matter, it is said, is unconsciousness (achit). But unconsciousness need not be and is not, in our view, the absolute negation or utter absence of consciousness, it is only an involved or involute consciousness. If consciousness is wakefulness, unconsciousness is nothing more than forgetfulness: it is only an abeyance or suspension of consciousness, not annihilation.

Thus the spiritualisation of Matter becomes possible simply because Matter and Spirit are not absolutely different, contradictory or incommensurable entities; they are one and the same reality, in different modes—even as water or water vapour and ice are in substance one and identical, although different in appearance. Spirit has become Matter and Matter at heart is Spirit. Spirit is latent in Matter, as Matter itself is a possible formulation involved in Spirit. Matter has come out of Spirit as Spirit pressed upon itself and gradually condensed and consolidated into the concrete material reality. Spirit has become Matter by a process of crystallisation, of self-limitation and exclusive concentration. The movement follows a definite line of self-modification along a downward gradient till it is consummated: it is one among an infinite variety of possible self-modifications, chosen and exclusively developed with a special purpose and a definite fulfilment in view.

A movement of involution through a series of terms—of consciousness—of gradually diminishing facial value has made the Spirit terminate in Matter. If it is so, it stands to reason that a movement of evolution, a return journey would make Matter culminate in Spirit. Thus the very fact of Spirit having become Matter, of Matter being a mode of the Spirit at once

creates the possibility of Matter being transmuted into Spirit. Now even granting such a possibility, it may be argued yet that the thing achieved is a resolution of Matter into Spirit ; it means the destruction of the characteristic form and consistency that is called Matter. We know, thanks to modern Science, that Matter can be transmuted into pure energy, but then it loses its materiality, it is dematerialised.

That is what some of the old spiritual disciplines taught. Even if there is no unbridgeable gulf between Spirit and Matter, they said, even if they are not incommensurables but form one reality, Spirit is the reality in essence, matter is an inferior formulation. Matter has unrolled itself out of the infinite, it can only be and it has got to be rolled back again into the Spirit.

Here comes the second cardinal principle in Sri Aurobindo's vision of the reality, *viz.*, that an "inferior" formulation of the Spirit, an involute on a "lower" plane is not essentially or truly, even in its outer and dynamic nature and character, a mere temporary or by-the-way reality, an "epiphenomenon"; its sole function is not simply to impede, diminish and obscure the real reality so that it has to be gradually rejected and eliminated on the way back to the source. As a matter of fact an inferior formulation has a double function: in the line of descent, it limits, obscures, deviates and in the end falsifies the higher reality; at the same time, however, it concretises, energises, incarnates what it obscures. But in the ascending line, that is to say, in the movement of reversal from the inferior to the superior, the movement need not be always that of disincarnation and dissolution, it may be that of purification and illumination and fulfilment. The analogy will not be then that of Matter being dematerialised into pure energy but that of Matter being transformed into a radiant substance, not losing itself in the process of radiation, being wholly made of the undying luminous stuff.

Such a movement of transforming evolution is not merely a possibility or a probability: it is a fact of nature. Indeed natural evolution means nothing less than that. First of all evolution means the reversibility of Nature ; for it is the backward move-

ment of an involutionary process. We have said that the supreme truth and reality—sat-chit-ananda, as it is called—multiplied and concretised itself gradually through various steps and stages of a diminishing power of expression or an increasing entropy of self-concealment: the main grades being the Supermind, the Overmind, the Higher Mind, the Mind, Life and lastly the body or Matter. Having arrived at the extreme end that Matter represents,—the farthest apparently from the original source,—the movement turns round and seeks to go up the ladder through the same gradations it has traversed. But this process of reversal is not merely a resolution and dissolution, it is a process of greater fulfilment and synthetisation, of sublimation as well as of integration.

Matter is the starting-point of evolution, it is there mere physico-chemical entity. But it undergoes a change, the first of its kind, a transmutation, when it is taken up by life, when it becomes the basis and receptacle of a living organism: vitalised Matter behaves differently from physico-chemical Matter. A farther and greater change is brought about in Matter when it is raised still higher and taken up by the mind, when it answers to the vibrations of a mental organism: mentalised Matter has yet a third norm of behaviour. The transformation of Matter in slow degrees towards a greater plasticity and spontaneity, a growing sentiency and luminosity is evident as one proceeds up the rungs of natural evolution.

This drive of evolution is a constant and permanent fact of Nature and she is in travail to bring about higher and higher stages of material transformation. It may not be easy to forecast from the present status what the future mode or modes of Matter would be like, even as it was surely impossible to forecast mentalised Matter or living Matter, but that does not make the thing less inevitable.

The inevitability arises from the very fact of this evolutionary urge that a stage will come when Matter will undergo another, more radical and crucial change; it will be taken up by a higher reality than mind and suffused with a light and

power belonging to that reality: a spiritual consciousness will emerge and with it spiritualised Matter, even as a mental consciousness emerged and mentalised (however inadequately) Matter and yet anterior to that a vital consciousness emerged and vitalised Matter. There cannot be a limit to the degree of spiritualisation also; for the degree of the Spirit that Nature manifests in an earthly body will also be the measure to which the body itself is spiritualised. A perfectly dynamic spiritual consciousness will have the power to perfectly spiritualise the body and life and mind. And this grade and power of the Supreme Spirit Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind.

We will try to understand the nature of sublimation and transformation by analogy and illustration. Mind, for example, we know, is an instrument which by itself is incapable of attaining to the knowledge of the Spirit or the consciousness of the Truth. As it is constituted at present it is not only not capable of that knowledge and consciousness, but is an obstacle to them. Its vibrations and formulations disturb and vitiate the higher rhythm. That is why it is repeated so often in the Upanishads:

Naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneyā (Katha)

or *Tan manasā na manute* (Kena)

or again *Na manasā prāptum śakyaḥ* (Katha)

and so on. Yet the same mind when it is not independent and master but subservient and obedient to the higher light becomes a channel for its dynamic embodiment, a conduit for its canalisation and expression in earthly life. Therefore the Upanishad says also

Manasaivedamāptavyam (Katha)

“By the mind too this has to be seized.” A mind that is not rigidly limited to the ratiocinative process, but has been remoulded in the light and rhythm of inspiration and intuition and revelation and other higher sources still beyond becomes at once a transfigured vessel, an apt instrument to incarnate and dynamise in the physical and material field truths and realities that normally lie far and above. Something of the kind, though in a small measure, happens in a poet or an artist,

for example. A poet who moves by vision and inspiration is not, at least need not, be devoid of mind: the mind in his case is not annihilated or even kept in abeyance, but sublimated, undergoing a reorientation and reorganisation, acquiring a new magnitude. Even if there is a suspension of the ratiocinative faculty, it would not mean a suspension of the mental power in itself, but rather an enhancement in a new degree. The same may happen to the other parts and planes of human consciousness and existence.

Of course, if one chooses one can side-track these intervening ranges of consciousness between the Spirit and Matter, and strike something like a chord line between the two; but also one need not follow this bare straight ascetic line of ascension; one can pursue a wider, a circular or global movement which not only arrives but fulfils. The latter is Nature's method of activity, Nature being all reality. The exclusive line is meant for individuals, and even as such it has a value and sense in the global view, for this too is contributory to the total urge and its total consummation.

We have seen that spiritualisation of Matter is an inevitable consummation that is being worked out by evolutionary Nature. We can go now still further and say that it is not merely a far-off inevitability that will come about some day or other, but a more or less imminent certainty. For Nature's evolutionary dynamis is not the only agent at work, it is not the only assurance of the *grand finale* envisaged. The Divine himself descends and meets and takes up the evolutionary force: he comes down as a dynamic conscious force in the terrestrial movement carrying the truth that is to be established here and now, acts and drives, first from above and then in and through the level actuality, and thus speeds and fulfils within a brief span what Nature left to herself would perhaps take aeons—Brahmic Yugas—to accomplish. Indeed Nature's evolutionary crises, where she had to effect a transcendence from one plane of creation to another, are always worked out swiftly by such a descent which imposes

an inexorable physical pressure as it were upon an earthly material which otherwise is slow to move and change.

Even of this descent of the Divine Consciousness, however, there are varying degrees, in accordance with the nature of the work it has got to do. In the inferior ranges of evolutionary Nature—the lower hemisphere, as it is called, of Mind, Life and Matter—Descent is partial and indirect and relative, the aim being a more or less reconditioning of Matter, not its thorough transformation: this becomes possible when Nature has risen to Mind and has prepared herself to take the further, the crucial leap into the higher hemisphere, the sphere of dynamic spiritual truth.

Nature's attempt at the transcendence of Mind opens the door for a more and more direct and integral descent of the Divine Consciousness, and in its highest degrees—the degrees of the Supermind—the Descent means a reversal of the normal values, a swift and total transfiguration of earthly life into the mould of supernal spiritual realities. An absolute degree of the Descent, an irruption of the Divine Consciousness in its supreme purity and fullness becomes inevitable in the end: for that alone can bring about the fulfilment that Nature ultimately has in view. Matter will yield completely, and life power too, only to the direct touch and embrace of the Divine's own self.

In this age we stand at some such critical juncture in Nature's evolutionary history. Its full implications, the exact degree of the immediate achievement, the form and manner of the Descent are things that remain veiled till the fact is accomplished. Something of it is revealed, however, to the eye of vision and the heart of faith, something of it is seized by those to whom it chooses to disclose itself—

Yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ

NOLINIKANTA GUPTA

Divine Evolutionism

No seer has a richer harvest of philosophic and religious literature to his credit than Sri Aurobindo whose seventy-first birthday falls on the 15th August, 1942. The author of this humble contribution, which is in lieu of altar flowers, has been influenced in manifold subtle ways by Sri Aurobindo's teachings and feels happy on this great occasion of moment to world history. It is as it were the moment when the abashed Prakṛti has withdrawn her dark inconscient hold on the puruṣa, the ignorant, so that he may perceive himself as the One in the many in relative manifestation born out of delight. Such an epoch is possible to human ignorance because of varied factors which reveal the constant descent and ascent of the Spirit Divine in many ways.¹

There are three facts in reality which have to be accepted, whatever metaphysical or occult status we grant to them either substantially or functionally ; these three are God, Nature and Man (or soul) that is related to both in two different ways. Some philosophers have affirmed that Nature is all and have reduced the soul to the level or figure of herself endowed with an epiphenomenal phosphorescence called consciousness and have denied God or else accepted God as merely Glorified Nature. Some others have maintained the opposite view that the soul endowed with consciousness, being capable of creative imagination and reproductive memory, does not require any nature apart from its own mental states for its existence. These have denied nature and affirmed themselves as the final or ultimate entities. A third class of thinkers have seen the fate of svabhāva (nature), niyati, kāla,² and others and having observed the

¹ I refer here to the fivefold descents of the Divine in Pāñcarātra literature.

² Śvet Up. I. 2.

ludicrousness of a soul that is ignorant (ajña) posing itself as the Grand Ultimate, however much it may be radically superior to the Inconscient, have affirmed a Deity that is Perfect Consciousness and Delight and Power over every other entity, soul or nature, and enjoying its varied delights in and through them. They have even tended to affirm a causal relationship or rather derivative relationship between the entities. This is the central theory of any evolutionary hypothesis, that the entities must have a unitary original substance from which all are pressed out or expressed, or on which all forms are impressed, or which is veiled or self-veiling in order to yield the other graded entities.

In ancient Indian Philosophic thought there are said to be four theories of manifestation or mere exhibition, such as the *secaka*, *jāla*, *barhina* and *abhivyakta* or *unmeṣa*. Creation is merely the exhibition of the veiled: it is a spreading out of the immanent, and what is in *sūkṣma* or subtle contracted form is revealed as gross, *sthūla*. This is the theory of creation which posits that the three entities are really shooting out or exhibition or manifestation of the One super-entity that enfolds them within itself in the subtle state which, for whatever reason of *līlā* or delight of self-expression, manifests itself like the peacock its feathers, like the fisherman his net, like the cloud-burst. But, as will be seen, these theories do not exhibit the inner ascent of the Divine in and through the process. It is well-known that ancient Vedic thought not merely did affirm that the Lord became many, but also, that having created all the material universe, He entered into it as the many whilst remaining the One Supreme Being that He as Cause was. Thus when speaking of the totality of creation we should have to go far beyond the ordinary limits of a mere manifestative or exhibitionistic theory.

There is to be assumed at the very beginning a substantial descent of spirit, a possession or assumption of the nature of matter with all its grades of Inconscience, for indeed there cannot be assumed a positing or 'ansthoss' of a not-self or non-

consciousness standing over against the self or spirit. It is a veiled or self-veiled consciousness for the purpose of working out a creative end, a secret and occult activity in and through the inconceivable opacity and resistance of the matter it has formed. Now it may be asked whether it is possible for a consciousness to veil itself in such a way as almost to abolish its very nature as consciousness. It may, therefore, be held that the consciousness will remain conscious, but what veils is a different entity, a *māyā* or *prakṛti*, *upādhi* or what not, which is different from the consciousness. Now we may say that if we merely accept the causal theory of *derivation* from consciousness of the matter then we will be faced with the problem of determining the 'how'. We should not forget that Primal Consciousness should be perfect, self-delighting and self-perfect, which can be at once the change and changeless, becoming and being and all. The Supreme Consciousness can and does manifest itself as and in the matter wherein it plays its supreme rôle of a firm and foundational substance of life and mind and all else that follow on its wake, as the firm tenement of life that possesses mind and all the planes above and below. On this foundation of matter, there is the descent *again* from the Supreme and of the supreme spirit in renewed manifestation, gradually and successively, of the informing principles of organization of matter, rescuing it from the dull beat of repetition and round of existence to a sense of the awakening potencies of its own elemental nature. Life grows out of this homogeneous matter and diversifies its forms and thus reveals its manifoldness. But when life began, there also manifested the individuating function of diversity, which is sometimes referred to matter itself but which in reality must be considered to be the core of the spiritual multiplicity that has descended firstly as life, and grew into mind, and is now moving forward to the recognition of that unique unity that is concealed from itself in order to discover the delight of the many. For there is in truth a delight in manyness as there is in oneness, a delight in relative manifestation as there is in absolute existence, and if the self or spirit

wished to participate in that isolation of itself from the rest and even as against the rest, whatever the consequences of the disrupted harmony, it has to veil itself or become ignorant or play the rôle of ignorance of the rest and the all else to which it is absolutely tied. For ignorance is this non-cognition of the relationship and unity, and reality of this unity. The soul or man is thus incarnate amidst matter already having registered his growth, and therefore mastered the intricate mechanism of matter having lived and moved and had his being in it as a child of matter, playing the ignorant (*ajñā*) for the purpose of some inward delight of his many-nature. The supreme Spirit in its manyness has descended into the womb of matter, vivified it and made life emerge out of it through His inner propulsion in order to extricate the potencies of His own Perfections in the conditions of relative and opaque existence. This is the secret of the inwardness of evolution. There is here seen no outward force, a carpenter or maker, a *Twastr*, who fashions the armaments or ornaments or animals or objects, but an innate undeniable propulsion which seems to organise life in patterns of unique complexity.³

It is a secret of spiritual evolution that the force or power that operates within matter and living forms and leads up to new and higher planes of ascent, identifies itself with the initial substance or foundation and rears itself up as if it were that substance itself that has decreed its ascent and innate revelation. If man appears as a child of matter, and even consciousness appears as an effect or resultant or emergence out of matter, it is because the Spirit that has descended as such into matter, itself a form of that Spirit, an earlier form, has so clearly wrought the instruments and organisms and senses out of it by closest association with it.

³ Bergson was right when he affirmed that in evolution he did not see a goal but an inward propulsion from behind urging on the *élan vital*. The inwardness is the essential characteristic of organism, though this inwardness in instinct is conditioned by the environment to which it adjusts.

"For man is precisely that term and symbol of a higher existence descended into the material world in which it is possible for the lower to transfigure itself and put on the nature of the higher and the higher to reveal itself in the forms of the lower" (Arya, I, p. 39).

"For man, the head of terrestrial nature, the sole earthly frame in which her full evolution is possible is a triple birth. He has been given a living frame in which the body is the vessel and life the dynamic means of a divine manifestation. His activity is centred in a progressive mind which aims at perfecting itself as well as the house in which it dwells and the means of life which it uses and is capable of awaking by a progressive self-realization to its own nature as a form of the Spirit. He culminates in what he always really was, the illumined and beatific spirit which is intended at last to irradiate life and mind with its now concealed splendours" (*ibid.*, p. 172).

Thus the evolutionary theory of the moderns is accepted in so far as the evolution is a gradual unfolding of greater and greater complexities in the inner structure of matter which lead to emergence of new characteristics of life and mind. Man has thus a triple birth, a birth in matter, a birth in life and a birth in mind. His body is thus an expression of his varied and continuous adaptations through many births and rebirths wherein his adaptations have made him master of the principles of material and vegetative and mental life. But with mind there has happened a stupendous transformation. Man began to be aware of the intrinsic gulf that separates himself from the vast mass of matter and even other forms of life. Though Biology has striven to show that there is no break in evolution, yet it has been unable to show that there are no yawning gulfs or missing links. Nor has embryology been able to substantiate that man indeed recapitulates the life-history of the universe during his embryonic state. One other thing also has been observed that so far as the differentiations of the senses and

mental functions are concerned there has been the maximum of material possibility achieved in man's evolution.

A mechanical theory, a vitalistic theory and a mental theory of evolution are all that modern science has been able to arrive at, and the result is disappointing. The vitalistic theory surrenders something fundamental to the mechanical, and the mentalistic theory cannot explain the inward drive of the process of evolution. The spiritual theory of evolution makes a departure. It is concerned with the continuous richness of the spiritual nature in all planes, and according to or in tune with the laws of each plane there is registered the perfection of exhibition of the spiritual nature. The individual or cosmic evolution is determined by a consciousness or self-consciousness of the mastery of the lower. In cosmic evolution such as in matter or Inconscience or Ignorance, there is not the self-conscious effort to control and determine the environment. When mind came into existence there has also happened the need to adapt consciousness to ends that are desirable to it. It is here we have the great gulf. But here even, science has shewn that there is no opposition between mind and matter, for mind governs and adapts and understands the laws of matter and vital life and utilises them for its own conscious and planned purposes. But this is not much. Inventions reveal the creative possibilities of mind, but they do not reveal the possibility of a total transformation of the material and vital nature that man is, not to speak his own mental nature. There are two worlds or rather three worlds or levels,—the world of the body with its sympathetic nervous system which is not amenable to his will except under great tapas or yogic control, his vital plane which moves in unconscious ignorant ways of instinct, not again amenable to consciousness and intellectual government, and lastly, the ineffectual angel of mind that struggles with forces it does not understand except superficially. It may be asked whether man cannot evolve a new consciousness and whether he is not indeed aware of a type of consciousness within himself that is higher than what he has—an intuitional or overmind

consciousness which can grasp the inner necessity of evolution. As yet such a consciousness has not become the chief power on our planet. It has not become general; only in particular minds or souls has it manifested with something of that force that transforms minds into superminds or gods.

We must ask ourselves here whether this upward process that has happened so far has not been the inward propelling force cosmically of the Spirit, and when mind came into the field, this Spirit as the indwelling seer has informed and led man to his present mental plane which has in some measure organised itself on the foundations of the prior productions or emergences. The need for this *interiorising of spirit* in matter and life and finally as indwelling seer (*antaryāmin*) in the mental creation in each individual shows that for the first time the *antaryāmin* manifested his unique *unitas multiplex* nature in the texture of mind or the ego. But the vicissitudes of this mind with its superficiality and pseudo-simplicity has led us to this present state. The *antaryāmin* thus far has been propelling, even in an unconscious manner, and guiding, even in a subliminal manner, the mind in its conduct and relation and commerce with the universe of other souls. It is here we find the mal-adjustment between mind and nature, mind and mind, and misery instead of delight has begun to play the major rôle. Man now faces a new environment of conflict and his former adaptations are not capable of helping him in the new situations. Man must be surpassed if mankind itself has to realize the immense possibilities of the Spirit. The human individual has indeed striven in manifold ways to solve the riddle of the Sphinx. Theories of Illusion, Superterrestrialism, Materialism and partial perfectionism through occult practices, have all been tried to the limit in Buddhism, Jainism, Absolutism and Illusionism, and Cārvākism. Mental theories suffer from one radical defect of being based on mere inference and partial understanding and partial emphasis. Even eclecticism of the mind do not bear the stamp of truth and appear as jumbles; and the several eclecticism, Greek or Hindu, are comparable to

the varied shake-ups of the kaleidoscope, not fundamental integral expressions of Spiritual Reality. Sri Aurobindo's great contribution consists in having realized at the very start that philosophies of mind suffer from a radical defect and can lead only to Agnosticism ultimately, however enlightened that may be.

So far we have seen evolution as being an inward propulsion leading to the manifestation of variegated forms of life and mind and already promising that culmination by means of an idealism which seeks an inward drive, it does not find, in the material and vital and the mental. Man caught up in the net of his own illusions has now to discover within himself and above himself a power and a consciousness exceeding immensely anything that he knows of. Baulked and thwarted, mind has come across the radical knot of its own existence and has become unhappy. Seeking to escape from itself, it has discovered that all ways of escape lead to prison-houses of illusion and nihilism. As Bergson pointed out, it is imperative, as it has been imperative, on the part of some rare souls to break through the shell of intellect and mere vitality and materiality into the free open spaces of the higher consciousness that is pure duration. Sri Aurobindo recognizes this possibility in the Divine descent as Avatār, just as I have pointed out the descent of God as antaryāmin, the many of the One. The importance of the avatār to evolution does not consist in the mere statement of the fourth adhyāya of the Gītā:

“Paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām”

but more the upliftment of humanity itself to the acceptance of the Higher and Highest consciousness which the Spirit Transcendent brings into play on the material or terrestrial plane. A close inspection of the avatār doctrine will reveal that each descent either direct, that is, *ayoniḥ*, or through human wombs (*yoniḥ*) registers a large upheaval of material and organic orders which resonate with the Descent and thus gather into themselves something of that germ or seed which would organize new life in them. But the acceptance of the law of the higher, and not

merely the tolerance of the higher, is the key-note. For the avatār is not merely a catalytic agent nor a kathartic principle, but an evolutionary principle—a germ or seed thrown into the womb of mind to grow in it and manifest itself in it as a child of mind. Thus the avatār is not to be considered as a miraculous intervention, as a mere messiah of hope or avenging angel but a creating God, a transforming Spirit; and so is it accepted in the figure of Trivikrama, He who made three strides and has become the Lord God of All.

The Lord, who is the avatār, is not therefore the warrior-fighter for the Good and destroyer of the Evil alone, but also the Teacher of mankind about the Higher Principle, the principle that He is indeed in all, as the person who propels the round of existence in all (bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni) through His Infinite Power. Thus it is in and through this Divine Teacher that the human disciple can ever hope to break through the restricting forces of the earlier formations, suited admirably though they are to those limited purposes. It is the Teacher Divine who informs the individual that he is not a mere constellation of desires, nor a mere ego isolated and limited, but in verity the instrument of the Divine Antaryāmin. To turn inward to this central principle within one self who is, be it known, also the central principle of all else, is the saving knowledge. To enter into this inner *sanctum sanctorum* of one's being, the antaryāmin, is to establish a continuity that has been sundered by the earlier diversifications for the realization of this unique diversity that resolves itself into or resonates with or mirrors the entire universe. It is therefore that evolution has to proceed on lines of higher consciousness that at once appears inward and interiorised self of oneself and all that one is and yet is transcendent to it in a continuity that goes far beyond all cosmic limits. It is this that is at once the strength and the soundness of the evolutionary ascent into Divine Nature.

Whatever might be the finality or goal visible to matter and mere life—and there is certainly no possible way of speaking

of any finality to material evolution or vitalistic evolution⁴—the human being is conscious of fourfold ends of dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa, which it is incapable of deciding or determining with any conclusiveness. Hastening confusedly to unknown ends modern man has come at last to a state of perilous apology for life, knowing not definitely as to what is dharma, what is real wealth, what is desirable and what is liberation. It would be beyond the scope of this essay to detail the intellectualistic, mystical, economic and politico-ethical attempts. Suffice it to say that no man seems to be certain about any one of his many pursuits. Under such circumstances, the necessity is for a clear and decisive 'way of welfare', the true path of ascent into a nature that shall satisfy the inward being.

This path is the path of transcendence and perfection through a growing into the Divine Nature by a personal and intimate relationship which is forged and fostered by total offering of the entire nature for the play of the higher forces. Man is now a square peg in a round hole. It is through the incidence of the Higher Power and Consciousness that he could adapt himself totally to the universe of the Divine. At the present state, man is not able to find any refuge in philosophy or incomplete religion of the mind but only in the transcendent descending force of the Divine.

In the earlier descents we have not any adverse force nor individuated protest from the lower. But in the mind and its body there have been set up autograms which refuse to yield up their structure and their function or modify their functions or obey the dictates of the mind and the higher consciousness. Man has made a prison-house, perfect, well-protected against new rays of light. It is for him to throw open his prison-house for he is also the prison-keeper. This is the next step in the spiritual ascent which has to be taken, for man has built up a notion of liberty which truly is the inward initiative in all evolutionary processes which cannot be smothered at all even through

⁴ Bergson and the emergent evolutionists have denied any goal to Duration and Process. Novelty seems to be their one fixed idea!

the threat of annihilation. It is the instinct for liberty—that mystico-fanatical zeal for freedom which is the sign of a living and growing consciousness which rebels against every encroachment by whomsoever. This inwardness of the instinct for freedom, expressed as *mokṣa*, *vināśa*, has to be turned into account by a free choice of the Higher Supramental Consciousness, whose knowledge is the *Vidyā* that is necessary for any ascent. Then also is *sambhūti* possible, the fourth birth, which is the beginning of a birth that knows no lower descents or degradation into the realm of matter, for it can live in these lower levels too with a freedom and omniscience and perfection without losing its poise and power and puissance. Beyond this fourth are other levels of Consciousness which the present man cannot appreciate.

Thus whilst we appreciate that the thirst for the supramental light and evolutionary propulsion reaching up to it are all that man can possess, we have to seek the germinating light and transcendent power from above, woo it through prayer and surrender, through consecrated act and integral offering of our entire body, vitality and mind, so that it may create a new being of us, and through us.

It would be clear that nothing less than the descent of the Divine into us in an integral manner can alter our mental, vital and physical nature without annihilating them. This is the *pūrṇa yoga*—a total union leading up to a total perfection and total delight of Being and Consciousness.

We can see here that Sri Aurobindo clearly points out that the explanation of evolution and its very nature must be sought in a Dynamic Perfect Consciousness which is propelling the lower types upwards from behind. This is in line with the most modern view of evolution maintained by Prof. McDougall and Prof. Bergson. Secondly, the evolutionary hypothesis is not complete if it merely accepts a mere inner drive towards multiple forms that only register repetition and duplication but not progress. On the other hand, the theory of inheritance of acquired characters of Lamarck, which had fallen into disfavour

at one time and has been returning to its own, does not go far except as showing that life has a wonderful capacity for adapting to changing environment and retaining this knowledge in an almost unconscious manner. It is when we come to mind and consciousness, we find that the ramifications and demands on life are so great that adaptation seems to be running on no settled lines except in certain limited lower mental planes. But what with the diversities of mental capacities and inventive ability and memory and selectivity, evolution has passed far beyond the age of mere adaptation to environment. Mind began to adapt the environment to its needs. Limitations soon came up and destructive possibilities of mind began to loom large. Witness the calamitous results of a progressive, inventive and masterful science yoked to the aboriginal demands of space and food and leisure. Sri Aurobindo points out that it is imperative that this situation must be changed, and changed immediately, by a total acceptance of life and matter and mind: matter with its materialistic foundation, life with its dynamical activity, and mind with its intellectual discernment are all needed, but they have to operate in tune with the laws of Spirit, the Supramental Divine. This is a departure in the history of evolutionary hypothesis. It was, however, known early enough in Indian Yoga that the transformation of personality (*kāya-siddhi*), salvation or liberation (*mukti*) just like inspiration and vision are not mechanical effects of ritualistic practices or psycho-physical askeis but are due to the Grace of God or due to the actual descent of God Himself into this human vessel in some fullness or partialness.

The Pāñcarātra system has spoken of fivefold descents of the Supreme Transcendent into His creation and his creatures, registering the continuity of His indwellingness in all through His power, knowledge, lordship, strength, luminosity and Consciousness. Evolution of the world is sustained as a continuous process by Him. Having created the world of matter, as the Cosmic Deity who is three-fold as Saṁkarṣaṇa, Aniruddha and Pradyumna, He entered into the creation

instigating and impelling the material categories up to the level of the mind and ego and senses. Then He descended into the many selves as their indwelling Lord Ruler Antaryāmin, and even into matter itself as the object of adoration and perfection of Deity as the Arcā. When man had arrived at the level of mind and intellection and was craving for guidance He descended into the terrestrial as the Avatār, showing the path and destroying false paths, rescuing and restoring the knowledge of the Divine who is the One Supreme Lord manifest as the five-fold—*unitas quintuplex* nature. Corresponding with this description of the Deity we should conceive of the five-fold births⁵ or evolutionary steps till we reach in the integral understanding of the Arcā in matter or visible form, the Antaryāmin in all souls, the Avatār in higher or supramind, the Cosmic unity of matter and spirit in the Vyūha and finally the Great Transcendent, Para, beyond all our comprehension.

In Pāñcarātra literature however except for the Avatārs, and to some extent the Arcā-images, the rest may have come into existence on this terrestrial scheme successively, as it has been said that they too have come into being for the good of creation. The Avatārs and the Arcā are considered to be descents full and complete of the Divine as much as the rest but having a personal relationship of teacher and adored objects of the devotees. For it is personal relationship that is the path and the way to transcendence: a surrender to the Avatār or Arcā is the immediate cause of the flow in of the Prasāda or Grace which is not merely

⁵ *Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 719: "May the peoples of the five births accept my sacrifice; those who are born of the light and worthy of worship." RgV. X, 53. 5.

Cf.

Viśvaksena Sam.: Caturvidhasya Bhagavān mumukṣūṇām hitāya vai/
Anyeṣāmapī lokānām sṛṣṭisthiyanta siddhaye//

Jayākhyā Sam.: speaks of Puruṣa, Acyuta and Satya as the vyūhas
of Para Viṣṇu or Vāsudeva instead of Pradyumna
Aniruddha and Saṁkarṣaṇa.

Another aspect of these descents lies in the fullness of manifestation of the divine in each of the descents. Cf. Śānti śloka of Vāj. Saṁhitā,

of love but of supernal light and knowledge, reciprocating the individual's willingness to follow Him alone. Periodic inundation or descent of the Higher or supramental consciousness or Spirit Force has been the one sign of a jump over to a new life, transformation or conversion. The constancy with which this inundation occurs till it becomes like the unceasing flow of oil (tailadhāra) or like the Himalayan-sourced Ganges (which in mystical or occult consciousness signifies the Supramental force that destroys all faults and sins and elevates and emancipates and transforms), will determine whether this human vessel will stand it or not. But stand it must and it will. The flood of supramental force will move slowly into the individual, thanks to the guiding hand and seer-wisdom of the Teacher, and transform and strengthen till it has made itself capable of withstanding the full flood of the Supramental Power even as the Ancient Śiva has shown it to be possible. Śiva is our Teacher, the standing Avatār of Master Supramental consciousness which he doles out to his devotees—the devotees of the Higher Heaven. The story of Bhagīratha-Sagara really reveals this great supramental descent into veriest matter which gave to it life and mind and has struggled to lead up to supramental regions but is awaiting the tapas and the Surrender of modern man to stand up to it.

Sri Aurobindo's theory of descent and ascent as the cardinal principle of evolutionary existence which leads up to the Divine integration of all levels under and through the Supramental Consciousness far exceeds any explanation that has been given by modern evolutionists.

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Sri Aurobindo and Mayabad

I

Sri Aurobindo's "Life Divine" has created a new atmosphere in the realm of thought and has raised new hopes in the realm of spirit. It has provoked intensive thinking and inspired elevated living. There are many things in it that have a close resemblance with the teachings of Sri Samkara which may mislead one to think that Sri Aurobindo has offered nothing new but has made a repetition of old things in a new garb. He might have in his Metaphysics the influence of Sri Samkara working, but it will be a mistake to say that even as a Metaphysician he is a follower of Sri Samkara. In the course of these three papers we shall try to find out the similarities and differences between Sri Aurobindo and Sri Samkara in their creative thought, in their spiritual ideal and in the discipline they followed for realising the ideal in life. In this paper I shall confine myself to Mayabad in order that its main tenets may not be lost sight of when we make a comparative study between Sri Aurobindo and Sri Samkara.

Philosophy is essentially the systematisation and evaluation of experiences. Experience reveals before us a sensuous universe and a super-sensuous universe. Science takes note of the sensuous experiences and tries to integrate them in a phenomenology, religion of the super-sensuous experiences. The supersensible as an experience has a character different from the sensible; it is something that is enjoyed. Both the sensible and the supersensible experiences have their locus in the person, still the person is more drawn out in the supersensible than in the sensible experience. Here, the person gets better expression of his being as a spiritual centre, energising and assimilating values. In the sensible order a person receives and raises a construction out of what he receives, but this

construction does not touch him or touch his being as person. Religious experience, on the other hand, is really an experience in which the person is brought out in its fullest as spirit and reveals an order of persons, a kingdom of wills in harmony with universal will. The sensible experience is more abstract, the supersensible is more concrete.

Mayabād does not negate the total experiences. It ascribes their proper values. Hence, it does not deny science or religion. On the other hand, in its search after value it accepts the dynamic identification with God, for the highest value in the world of Will is realised in the identity of Wills. In other words, it indicates the superimposition of the divine will upon the human will. The difference between the two is not eternally fixed. Religion has in it the implication of some form of identity between man and God on the dynamic side. This identification may not be complete but it is still there. Religious experience, therefore, aspires to a personal identification with God. Science, on the other hand, presents a symbolic world which does not touch personality. These two orders are distinct from each other. Metaphysics has to evaluate these experiences in the light of Eternal Truth. Experiences, supersensible or sensible, according to Sri Samkara, both belong to the pragmatic or empirical order, for they are equally experiences of a pragmatic or an empirical mind but do not represent the fundamental Truth behind these relative experiences. These experiences are experiences of a subject in relation to an object. Fundamentally their criterion does not differ, for both have origin in the relativity of knowledge. Religious experience including the exalted experiences of a mystic has, according to Sri Samkara, a limitation because ultimately it is an experience relative to a subject. There may be a state of absorption but still it is not the perception of Reality. It is the heightening of feeling in the relative consciousness in which the subject loses himself in the object. It is not to be conceived as the Absolute experience. The difference between the super-sensible and the Absolute experience is that

the super-sensible is enjoyed, but the Absolute experience is not enjoyed. The question of enjoyment does not arise. This Absolute experience can only be characterised as something that is beyond all tension and relaxation, beyond all determination, all worth or enjoyment. It is what it is. It is completely indeterminate. The main distinction between the super-sensible and the Absolute experience is this that the one is a feeling-state and the other is pure awareness.

Sri Samkara's philosophy is essentially founded upon the analysis of various experiences, for they represent the different phases of Being. Philosophy attempts to synthesise these phases, for it aspires to an all-embracing speculative construction, attempting to integrate the varied experiences. Sri Samkara does not follow this line of thinking, for he considers that the main task of metaphysics is to discriminate the Reality from the appearance, and not to integrate them, for such integration is impossible. Sri Samkara has raised up an integration of our relative experiences and our relations in a unified scheme. But this integration is the integration of appearances, but not the integration of appearances and Reality. Philosophy, as an all-integral knowledge, is not possible, for integrality presupposes differences and subsequently unity which is not to be conceived of transcendent Reality—it is supra-conceptual.

Thought moves in the world of relations, it builds up a scheme of relations, which, on deeper insight, is found to launch in a world of antinomies. Thought obeys the pragmatic instinct and builds up a construction. The inherent contradiction in thought invites us to transcend thought in our search after Reality—thought pushes to transcend its limitations.

Sri Samkara accepts the degrees of experiences as a matter of course, for he keeps his mind open and cannot immediately reject what is evident and apparent. Experience which subsists for a moment and is then denied is no reality. The kind of experience which has no denial and subsists for ever is reality. The Absolute experience is to be distinguished from all other

experiences, even from the finest super-sensible experiences, by the criterion of enduringness. The super-sensible is *agreeable* but *not enduring*. This distinction between appreciativeness and enduringness is the distinction that differentiates religion from metaphysics. Sri Samkara, as a metaphysician insists more upon enduringness than upon agreeable feeling. Eventually, he has to accept a state of existence in which all differences disappear, leaving aside Being, the ultimate Reality. Metaphysically considered, the order of appearances or relative experiences has no footing or place in the Absolute, for it is the construction of our relative consciousness which totally disappears in the Absolute. But still appearance or relative experience has to be explained, and for this explanation Sri Samkara offers his theory of *Maya*. *Maya* is a principle of limitation and individuation located in Brahman but which does never affect the transcendental integrity of its Being. This problem has assumed a very great importance among Vedantists. There is a school that does not accept at all the creative order. This is the famous school of *Gourapada's Ajātavad*—the world does not exist at any time, Reality is beyond the category of time. The order of appearance does not exist either in the past, or in the present or in the future. *Ajātavad* is the uncompromising denial of appearance—nay it is more. The denial presupposes the semblance of existence, which it does not endorse. (2) There is the second school of *Dristi-sristi-Vada*—that the world exists because we perceive it; it has no independent existence of its own beyond our perception. *Esse is percipi*. It is a kind of projection of the self, having no reality or objectivity of its own. (3) The third theory is that the world is objective and we perceive it because it exists, and it exists because it emerges due to the creative unfolding of *Maya*. It does not accept *the reality* of the universe, although it does not deny *its objectivity*. This position draws a distinction between Reality and Objectivity. A thing may be objective but not real. It is objective in the sense that it has independent and extra-mental existence, but not real in the sense that it is enduring. Sri Samkara refuses to accept the

world as a phantasmagoria of the senses. It has an apparent existence and a pragmatic value.

It is now possible to speak of eternal values and religion. The objective order had its root and basis in *Maya* energised by *Ishvara*. The Absolute, the moment it concentrates itself through *Maya*, becomes *Ishvara*. *Ishvara* is the concrete unity of existences. So long as our finite personality exists and so long as it interprets the order of appearance in the terms of values, it will take it to be a hierarchy in which the finite souls, according to their capacity of being, assimilate the supreme existence, and move with the sense of its integrality. Sri Samkara envisages the unfolding of personality embracing greater depths of being with their moving harmonies and absorbing beauties. The supreme realisation may come with the divine vision of things and the unfading glories of the super-sensible reality as *Hiranyagarbha* and *Ishvara*, but still such supreme beatitude lies in the path of indirect realisation, in the path of spiritual ascent. Sri Samkara never loses sight of the fact that this realisation is concrete and cannot aspire to reach the plenum of being in the Absolute, the greater and the wider stretches of Being, the more luminous consciousness, and the supreme glory and the ineffable blessedness. "The God of religion, inherent in completest experience, is an appearance of reality as distinct from being the whole and ultimate reality" (Bosanquet: *The Value and destiny of the Individual*, Lecture VIII). Religious consciousness does not then represent the supreme consciousness for it cannot subsist without being concrete implying relationship between the finite and the infinite in which the finite enjoys its touch and impress. Sri Samkara in spiritual life goes farther than this and envisages a dynamic identification with the divine in the *Ahamgraha-upasana*, but this cannot give the final beatitude, for, the dynamic identification is at best the heightening of will which does not affect our being or remove its finitude. It is an intensive experience suspending or outstanding for the moment the finite consciousness, thus representing an extreme stretch in dynamic

consciousness. It can produce the temporary possession of a stirring cosmic will but it cannot produce a complete dynamic identification—even if it does, the finite being moves with intrepid activity, inexhaustible inspiration and unending energy, magnified consciousness, but it cannot remove the distinction that still lurks between the finite and the Infinite. The goal which appears to be so much stimulating and appealing has to be left aside because it does not bring in the final consummation in the removal of the limitations of being. The intensive and the expanded being which one may feel in the path is, after all, the expansion of a dynamic personality but it does not represent the Absolute which is beyond all intensiveness and expansiveness and represents a unique state of existence in which all dividednesses die out. This is, according to Sri Samkara, Truth. Truth exists in one immutable form of being which is beyond all transformation, beyond all name and form, beyond all creative manifoldness. It is that which exists for itself and in itself. The spiritual path in Sri Samkara has two forms. Though Samkara has called the one indirect and the other direct, he has emphasised the direct path, because it is ultimately the path of final realisation, viz., the withdrawal of ignorance and the realisation of Identity. Finite and infinite consciousness are ultimately limitations, and the moment one realises the identity of the finite and the Infinite in being and essence, as distinguished from expression and power, one comes to be conscious of a supreme identity of awareness. The direct path, therefore, emphasises not only the understanding of the principle of identity but the tracing it out in our consciousness by differentiating it from the dynamic expression of it. Consciousness does never lose its transcendence and enjoys it all along even when it is apparently active. This transcendence is native to it. This native transcendence is to be felt in the depth of our consciousness, in *Sakshi*. This discipline of differentiating *Sakshi* from the mutations and changes of conscious life will give us the clue to realise the supreme peace of undifferentiated being—the *Parama Siva*—the silence of pure Being. This path is the path

of complete transcendence which is not in any way affected by delightful or even magnificent experiences on the path. Here we have the negation of all mutable experiences or even the highest expressions of the Infinite in its qualitative or quantitative magnitude. It is the supreme Being in its Superb Silence.

This direct path is for those who are specially fitted and who have been supremely convinced of the illusoriness of appearances. It may be supposed to imply extreme withdrawness but it is really neither contemplative withdrawness nor active outwardness for, the highest reality can never be represented to be either passive or active. Oscillations of life either in cosmic activities or in meditative inwardness do not affect in the least the Absolute Being. Those who are not so highly fit, follow the second path, the indirect path, by gradually moving their finer potentialities and establishing greater and cosmic rhythms in their own being. They assimilate more and more the nature of *Isvara* by identifying themselves with it in their being, thought and action. This identification which stirs our dynamic nature is eventually distinct from the kind of identification immediately pointed out. Here the Soul moves on its wings into the Infinite expanse, enjoying a trans-subjective reality which embraces everything, which is in the heart of everything, but which exceeds everything. There is a tendency towards transcendence even in this as the ego of the man is lost in an existence in its widest commonalty spread. The soul here enjoys the widest stretches of being and consciousness at moments superseding the order of finite ends or values, being absorbed in the ecstasy of supreme *Peace* that pervades the whole existence. Still, it is a state which may give us an expanse of consciousness in intimate touch with everything and being, but it is not that supreme Stillness in which even ecstasy is not possible. The serenity of transcendence has, therefore, to be distinguished from the ecstasy of ineffable existence enjoying the supreme exaltation in the deep recesses of being. Sri Samkara naturally has differentiated the ultimate realisation from all kinds of ecstasies, even the ecstasy of a blissful awareness.

II

In the first paper we make it clear that Sri Samkara is a transcendentalist, although he gives an explanation of the world order through his doctrine of *Maya*. Sri Aurobindo here differs from Sri Samkara. While Sri Aurobindo accepts the doctrine of the Absolute, he says that the Absolute and the appearances are not two separate things, they are an integral existence. Therefore, the world order must be interpreted, according to Sri Aurobindo, not on the analogy of a circle and its circumference but on the analogy of a spiral. The spiral maintains a continuity with the initial starting point without losing itself in it.

The Absolute is absolute not by itself alone but by the total expression which emerges out of it. Dynamism and status are equally real and none of them are illusions. Reality is poise as well as stir—silence as well as movement. Reality comprises within it potentiality and actuality. There are phases in its expression where the dynamism is not so clear or not so much manifest or evident. We must not think that the process of expression is merely appearance in the sense in which the Absolutist understands that term. It is the appearance of something unfolding in creative evolution. If we look at the ultimate Reality as pure Existence, it is indeterminate. Pure *Sat* might have no qualifications, but when that Existence appears as a conscious process, as *Chit*, we see that it is not pure *Sat* in the sense of a pure indeterminate existence. It is *self-determinate*. Reality has in it an eternal tendency of becoming determinate. It has got in it an inherent, immanent necessity of expressing itself in the creative order through self-expression. Reality determines Itself. Without this determination, there can be no creative order and if, therefore, Brahman is self-determining, it implies that Brahman is self-emerging. Therefore, the whole world order that we see before us is a kind of expression of the indeterminate Being which becomes determinate in the creative process. Sri Samkara says that this *Lila* of Brahman is a spontaneous expression of the Infinite, and in creating this world order, Brahman

does not take the help of anything else. This world process is a creative emergence out of Brahman, and in this there is no difference between Sri Samkara and Sri Aurobindo. Sri Samkara posits the world process in the Absolute and at the same time denies it in the Absolute. The simultaneous position and negation gives his *unqualified Monism*. It is here that Sri Aurobindo differs from Sri Samkara. Although Sri Samkara's philosophy maintains the doctrine of spontaneous expression in *Lila*, it is always relative to empirical consciousness. The self-evolution or self-expression of the Absolute in the creative order is accepted with this qualification. In the case of Sri Aurobindo, it is not accepted with any qualification. If this *Lila* is an urge of self-expression of Brahman, then this urge cannot be an illusion. It is as much real as Brahman. The world is self-emergence of Brahman through space and time, and therefore it has a truer and deeper significance.

Sri Aurobindo has a synthetic mind. Behind his schemes of politics, sociology, psychology etc. there is a grand metaphysical structure which emanates from a deep urge of spirit within him. According to him, from the pure indeterminate Brahman we get the consciousness of "I" and gradually out of this "I" comes the "not-I". The "I" becomes the subject and the "not-I" the object. This consciousness of "I" and "not-I" is synthesised in a form of consciousness which is called *Sadvidya* in the Shaiva philosophy. This synthesis is the first emergence interconnecting the creative unfolding of Prakriti and the transcendental expression of Brahman. The creative order is not completely disconnected from the transcendental, it is continuous with it, it appears different because of its grossness which prevents the luminous reflection of spirit in the order of matter, life and mind. Hence, according to Sri Aurobindo, there is a process of gradual condensation in evolution from the rarefied height of the Parama Siva to the concentrated matter.

Immediacy of knowledge as characterising the transcendental experience is distinguished from the relational experiences.

Immediate experience does not involve relation or any kind of mediateness, and, therefore, there is no relational consciousness in that supreme awareness of *Param Shiva*. Immediate experience is always transparent, luminous and self-expressive. There is a notion prevalent amongst the metaphysicians that immediate knowledge is beyond thought-concepts and has no content. Sri Aurobindo speaks of many kinds of immediacy, the transcendental immediacy, the supra-mental immediacy, the over-mental immediacy, the intuitive immediacy, the higher mental immediacy, the conceptual immediacy and the sense immediacy. This vast range of immediate knowledge reflects the total existence and exhibits its heirarchy and integrality. This integrality does not deny distincts. They are assimilated in the totality. The lower is assimilated in the higher, the higher is assimilated in the still higher, and the process continues till the ultimate integration is reached. There is also a subconscious immediacy, which reflects consciousness in its homogeneity. If a man develop his psychic powers and throws flash of concentrated light in the dark corners of his being, he will have immediate knowledge of the sub-conscious depths of mind. According to Sri Aurobindo, relational knowledge is intermediate between two homogeneities, which open in two directions—the one towards the superconscious knowledge and the other towards the subconscious knowledge. When a connection is established between these two, the superconscious heights and the sub-conscious depths of our being, we have then really the totality of experience. While the old metaphysics show an escapist tendency in the denial of all relative experiences, Sri Aurobindo does not favour the denial of experiences. He integrates these experiences in the vision of an all-embracing totality by connecting the super-conscious and the sub-conscious and by transforming the latter by throwing light from the former. This fills the whole being with a new light and move the chords of being with a new harmony and vigour. Man becomes a free spirit.

Sri Aurobindo criticises Sri Samkara's theory of Illusion. Illusion implies a super-imposition, as that of a snake upon a rope. He says that, if super-imposition is a correct doctrine, there must be two things—one representing the rope and the other representing the snake. But if there is only one Existence—Brahman—, then where does this illusion come from? If one says there is an order of *Maya* and also there is Brahman and that the order of *Maya* is super-imposed upon Brahman, it comes to this then that the order of *Maya* is as much real as Brahman. Sri Aurobindo says that Sri Samkara has no reply to this. This empirical order, according to Sri Samkara, is eternal, it has no beginning in time but it ends in time. Sri Samkara is clearly explicit here. When a man has attained liberation, this order collapses for ever and it is finished for him who has attained identity—consciousness with Brahman. Sri Aurobindo thinks the position involves a fallacy,—a fallacy of making an existence timeless, without a beginning in time, but ending in time. Something that has no beginning but ending in time passes our comprehension. Both Sri Samkara and Sri Aurobindo accept the eternity of the creative process due to *Maya*, but while Sri Samkara accepts the concentration to be seeming; Sri Aurobindo accepts it to be real.

Difference also exists between these two great teachers in their conception of Ignorance. Sri Samkara's doctrine of ignorance is *Anadi* and *Santa*. He says that what we call ignorance is *Jnana-birodhi*, i.e. positively opposed to knowledge, and as soon as there is knowledge, ignorance vanishes. But Sri Aurobindo says what we call Ignorance is still *knowledge*, imperfect knowledge. Ignorance is a lower degree of knowledge. The difference between knowledge and ignorance is a difference in degree only and not in kind. To Sri Samkara they are positively different in kind. Naturally to Sri Aurobindo the creative order born of ignorance continues even when the perfect knowledge is reached; it is not denied, but it is seen in spirit in its widest commonalty spread with the freshness and glory of a dream. This conclusion is not tenable in

Sri Samkara's philosophy, for the withdrawal of ignorance implies the removal of the world-order. Sri Samkara and Sri Aurobindo differ in two most fundamental points—in their doctrines of illusion and ignorance. To Sri Aurobindo world is not an illusion, a phantom—we do not see through phantom walls. It is real, definitely full of meaning and purpose. Evolution and involution represent the movement of life and consciousness in ignorance and knowledge. Sri Samkara says evolution is a fact and a possibility in ignorance, in pure consciousness there is neither involution or evolution. If Sri Aurobindo is an evolutionist, Sri Samkara is an illusionist and transcendentalist.

Emergence of the world order is relative to the limitation or concentration without which the creative order is not explicable. Creative unfolding implies the concentration of ignorance, and the order of knowledge is the progressive advance in wider consciousness and amplitude of being encountering the immensities of life and existence, and finally the ultimate Reality in which everything is seen in its place and enjoys the status of equality and fellowship with Brahman. In the same way if we go down lower and lower there we see that everything is shrouded in inconscience and ignorance. Light has never been extinguished. There is a continuity of light through the fields of existence. In the order of evolution a time will come when our ignorance will be transformed and everything will be seen and measured in the all-blazing light. Our mental, vital and physical being—all will be lighted by the light of the ever-radiant Sun of Spirit, the glorious Heaven will be apparent before us and life will throb with a new freshness and vigour, and a new order of evolution will emerge out. Sri Aurobindo's objective is not to deny the multiplicity of existences. If he is at all denying these experiences, it is rather to make them richer, wider and more comprehensive by drawing on the divine knowledge, bliss and light in our life and its activities so that their human meaning may be transformed, that man may feel the throbbing of the Divine life through the world order thus fulfilling the prayer of Christ

"Thy Kingdom come." Sri Aurobindo is a prophet of divine life in the order of things and beings. He believes in more and more life, more and more light, fuller and still fuller existence. It may be that in the course of this attempt and adventure we may have to pass through all sorts of experiences that are bitter and terrible, but still it is better to stand before this terrible experience than to deny life. He wants us to stand before life, while standing fully before it, to find out the nectar of life,—the ambrosia of life—in place of its apparent bitterness in discord and suffering and of its terribleness in devastation and death.

The next point of similarity lies in the theory of perception. The Naiyaika theory of perception holds that perception implies sense-contact. But the mere contact of a thing with the senses does not advance a convincing theory, hence the Samkhya doctrine holds that perception requires direct reporting through the *buddhi* to the consciousness. This implication is necessary, otherwise the whole process stands unilluminated. The Vedantic theory holds that perception in each case always implies a reference to the immanent consciousness. In every case of perception, there is implication of Brahman, of pure Consciousness, without which there can be no perception at all. The Samkarites say that all our perceptions are indeed reflections of things in our consciousness which is made possible by the identity of our consciousness with the consciousness immanent in the object. Therefore, when one thing is perceived, an identity is established between our consciousness and the consciousness immanent in the object or the world. The object of perception is related directly to the universal consciousness as its basis and locus, and its direct knowledge is possible by establishing a relation with this consciousness. The object exists not in my mind, but exists in the universal consciousness. If I am to perceive it, then my consciousness must be identical with the universal consciousness and that is possible through the psychic projection which establishes an identity between my consciousness and the consciousness immanent in the object. Every case of perception then is a form of identification with Brahman. This habit of

establishing identity, if it can be consciously developed, will spontaneously lead on to the realisation of identity with Brahman. Therefore, the Vedanta theory of perception is this that, whenever I perceive any particular thing, I perceive this thing only because my consciousness becomes identical with the Brahman-consciousness, without which the perception is not possible.

Sri Aurobindo thinks in a similar way. He sees the psychic element in perception without which a direct and immediate contact is not possible. This is true in all perceptions but this is clearly drawn out where perceptions do not require sense-contact at all. In fact, our senses always work within limitations. These psychic perceptions are transparent and reveal the subtle layers of the mind, and when we go beyond the psychic into the over-mental perception we immediately see things far and distant. If we develop this potentiality within us, the physical world and the luminous existences reveal themselves to us. Human mind has got these capacities. Our perceptions are not limited by the senses, they outgrow the sense-contact and their field become wide and subtle. Pātanjali also says that Yogis can develop their *Prajna* (Vivekajaprajñā) in such a way that everything is reflected to them. This is a question of development of our powers. According to Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of perception, therefore, there is a gradual development of perception from the sense-experiences to the psychic, over-mental and supra-mental experiences involving the infinite dimensions of being and finally establishing identity between us and the universal consciousness. We first feel the freedom of an expansive existence and the direct knowledge of the over-mental order. The more we pass into the over-mental order, the more we establish a permanent contact with that order, the more we have all the powers of the over-mental plane. If we establish ourselves there permanently, we can outgrow our nature. The more we open our integral consciousness, the more our perception will grow, the more we will have the experience of what is called the cosmic Being and Reality. In fact, this Yoga unfolds our supra-mental powers, by the development of which

we can possess all possible knowledge. This over-mental or supra-mental expansion has the direct effect of influencing subtle forces. Power goes with knowledge. Thus will be formed the centres of gnostic consciousness and being, and this world order which is working through confusion and errors will gradually pass away ; and there will be the dawn of a new order with the sure promise of a new life unfettered in knowledge and pregnant with powers.

III

Our discussion naturally bring us to the consideration of eternal values. In Indian philosophy, the conception of values is as old as the problem of being or existence. Value is a sense of appreciation—a sense of worth, something that we seek as desirable. In Indian philosophy, generally, *Moksha* has been regarded to be the highest concept of value. The Samkya, the Pātanjal and the Samkara Advaita, however different may be in metaphysics, they are one in their conception of value—which is the attainment of consciousness, unfettered and purely transcendental. In Sri Samkara's philosophy, the concept of being and the concept of value are both identical. The value is freedom from empirical impressions and pragmatic satisfactions natural to relative consciousness. These concepts are not different though the approach is. Being is associated with truth, liberation with value. Therefore, in *Muktivada*, the value has been conceived as the highest form of glory not in achieving any state of blessed consciousness but in achieving transcendental identity in which the finite consciousness, its creations and satisfactions are all lost in the Silence of Being. Sri Aurobindo, a lover of dynamism, does not accept this conception of value. He has not denied anywhere this possibility. He invites the Nirvanic calm as a state of supreme release and blessedness attainable at the moment when our consciousness is freed from the world of Kshara. The world of mutations dissolves before our vision of the immutable. Akshara Brahman is a desirable state in our spiritual seeking. This

Akshara is a state of consciousness which is purely homogeneous, in which there is no differentiation. Akshara Brahman must come up before our consciousness if we are serious in our pursuit of the Eternal Truth. Mind is governed by the mutations of the Kshara-Prakriti so that when the prakritic dynamism is suspended, an inviting experience of an unruffled consciousness is felt and enjoyed. This experience is so absorbing that all feelings are shaded and nothing but a dazzling consciousness in which all differences are lost is left. The man who realises such consciousness has got a relief from the conflicts of theoretical and practical reason. Naturally, therefore, it is welcome as a beatitude in which the contradictions of experience and the conflicts of life are lost. It comes in our search after the highest beatitude. But this is not the highest consummation. As a lover of dynamism, Sri Aurobindo says if there is an equable peace of Akshara Brahman, there is equally the blissful dynamism of Spirit. It is not the creative dynamism of Prakriti but something that is purely transcendental,—that goes beyond Prakriti and Akshara Brahman,—something that is inherent in Brahman, which he calls *Purushottama*. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo, following his search for the Eternal Truth, realises the world of supreme beatitude—a world of clear blissful experience and revelation beyond the world of Akshara Brahman in *Purushottama*. The supreme value lies here in the vision and the realisation of the Integral Existence and giving expression to our life impulses moving in divine inspiration. A helpful comparison can be here traced with the fundamental spiritual affirmations of the Bengal school of Vaishnavism. Sri Jeeva Goswami conceives three stages in the expression of spirit; (1) in the first stage spirit is realised in its relation to the order of nature—as the dispenser of justice, the holder of power, the sustainer and the regulator of the world. It is technically called *Paramātman*; (2) in the second stage spirit is realised as the undifferentiated Akshara Brahman; (3) in the third stage spirit is realised as *Bhagwān*, God, the person

of ineffable beauty and supreme glory. It stands in connection with the world of persons. But there is still a difference between Sri Aurobindo and Sri Jeeva Goswami. According to Sri Jeeva every finite soul retains its individuality up to the last, and even if the world of mutations are all removed from our consciousness, the individual soul is never lost because each soul is unique and its individuality remains for ever. When we are assimilated in the divine, we may have the consciousness of the divine life and existence from various angles and view-points,—it may be sometimes of pure knowledge, sometimes of pure love and sometimes of pure service. Many states of consciousness may come, according to the development of our soul and according to the bent of our being. But this realisation is ultimately a realisation of harmony. The individuals, since they are free from all kinds of egoism, move in a world of divine harmony in blissful resonance and unison of being, each retaining his individuality and contributing to the richness of the Divine Life. Each is a person and the Absolute is the Supreme Person realising his fullest being in the community of persons. The highest realisation gives us a spiritual federation, the contact wherein is intimate because of the direct and immediate touch. Sri Aurobindo thinks that there is a difference between *person* and *personality*. Personality is something that has come in our association with Nature, but person is an original and native existence. When man transcends the limitations of his personality and is established in that realisation, he shall have unlimited knowledge and being, but at the same time he will not lose his uniqueness. The *Samkhya* says that when every individual soul is liberated from the bounds of personality created by the bond of nature, he experiences the unfettered existence, of *Purusha*, the Person. Sri Aurobindo maintains that our individual soul, beyond the limitations of Kshara Prakriti, overcomes the limitations of personality and attains the freedom of a person ; it is unlimited in being and knowledge. Psychological knots are altogether removed, and we realise ourselves to be

spiritual persons. In the height of spiritual realisation we feel an orb of central light—with sparkling stars round about it shedding their soft light and serene lustre on the infinite vista of life. The glory and the richness of existence in the Infinite is beyond the access of highest imagination and conception. The highest realisation will be something in which we shall feel dynamically identical with the Infinite. There is not the least difference between us and God. The difference is only *our intellectual construction*.* At the same time, this is not the static identity and, therefore, the more we aspire towards Divine life, the more we assimilate the divine in our life, the more and more we feel its possession and finally its identification. Dynamic identification admits of varied feelings in realisation,—at times the identification is partial, at times it is complete. The aspiration of the finite to assimilate the infinite in its being is a never-ceasing process, and it is quite natural with dynamic realisation, in which every onward step in the way of realisation opens out still higher possibilities which are again assimilated and in this way the finite assimilates the infinite nature, growing in intensity and vastness—attaining dynamical identity in Being.

This centric aspiration and assimilation follow creative projection. Brahman realises the concrete blissfulness in creative unfolding. God realises his own nature as a person, through a society of persons which implies the imperative necessity of a creative expression to rise out of the bare potentiality into a mould of rhythmic expression and concrete history. The delight is the delight of projection and then of assimilation of it in its own Being. The process is eternal. So, the creation is as much interesting as the aspiration after redemption. In fact, this is going on eternally,—man's aspiration for redemption on the one hand and God's vision of free play and concentration on the other. These two processes go side by side,

* Vaishnavism conceives a distinction, if not a difference, between the Divine Person and the finite individuals, though it holds that personality is no stamp of nature upon the Soul. It is its native character.

and the more we become Godlike and understand this world as the sportive expression of an inherent delight, the more we become transformed in our consciousness, the more we move in symphony with the Divine.

Then, the question may come—what about *Maya*? Sri Aurobindo distinguishes between two kinds of *Maya*—*Vidya* and *Avidya Maya*. *Avidya Maya* creates distance and difference, *Vidya Maya* gives the integral vision—allowing no differentiation, no limited vision. There shall be the vision of one identical Reality expressing Itself through the world order. In fact, our intellect is not sufficient to conceive this, because the intellect thinks in terms of relations and differences. But when we have the spiritual approach and vision, we feel the harmony of life pervading the earth and the heaven, we attain an integral awareness, a blissful consciousness. Sri Aurobindo does not dismiss this world and the empirical consciousness completely. In order to realise the Divine in our very breath,—that our thinking is His thinking, our aspiration is His aspiration, our consciousness is His consciousness, our doing is His doing,—we must feel that everything is moving cosmically, functioning cosmically under the impress and the influence of the Divine Power. The supreme value of existence does not lie in losing the personal hold of our being, but in amplifying it so that it can grow in being, knowledge and holiness. Even in the widest expansion of being and in the greatest dynamic forcefulness, the person is not lost ; the person enjoys his freedom from the natural limitations and appropriates the super-natural expansion and force. The person is drawn out in its fullest expression when his being is transformed in such a way as can give unfettered expression to his spiritual essence and divine impelling. The person emerges out fully in the aspiration after assimilating the divine life and consciousness and the Supreme Value is displayed in giving expression to and fulfilling the divine purpose in the creative order.

In this path of spiritual progress, four stages can be indicated: (1) Silence, (2) Light, (3) Life, (4) Power. The spirit has its sure indication first in the descent of Peace,—the

peace beyond understanding,—a silence in our being in which one feels as if the entire empirical being is passing way into nothing. This silence is essentially necessary in order to allow us a safe access from the world of the *Kshara* into the *Akshara* Brahman. This silence provides a blissful ease and freedom from this world of conflicts. When the silence is well-established in our being, we shall have the light of spirit. As soon as we have established complete silence, the Infinite, ineffable light of Purushottama begins to manifest. It is here we are surrounded by the infinite awareness, the ether of consciousness. After light, comes a state in which we have infusion of life and energy into our vital processes. Therefore our life is transformed by the cosmic life-principle and we feel its impress and urge everywhere, inviting divine harmony and rhythm. With this, our *Prana* becomes completely transformed. The infusion of Light and Life goes down into our physical being filling the cells of body with infinite bliss and energy moving us with the force, power and intensity. Power is established when the dynamic identification has been complete. It comes last, for the adept then acquires fitness to usher in cosmic movements and changes. The descent of life makes our physical being fit receptacles of higher powers. Sri Aurobindo seeks to establish the direct and living contact between Man and God. It is not merely intellectual understanding but it is something which is purely concrete and positive,—a direct feeling of the higher consciousness and life. Not only that, we shall feel that God is moving through us, working through us, and we shall be finding that everything is being filled with divine life, divine splendour and divine light. Hence, his yoga is so different from that of Patanjali. According to Patanjali, the greatest realisation is possible after we have got the *Viveka Khyati*, a clear discrimination between the creative order and the transcendental Purusha. The Vedantist says that Brahman is not affected by any kind of dynamism, be it of higher order or of lower order. Activity or passivity is a matter of our own discipline. It has

nothing to do with the transcendental Brahman who is neither static nor dynamic. Sri Aurobindo differs. His yoga is to realise God within us,—God will descend down and revive our faculties with all dynamic possibilities. Therefore, his Yoga is not the yoga of the escapist, but it is the yoga of realising fulness of life with its full meaning and implications. In this Yoga, the divine seeks expression through our being, through our transformed consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo differs from the Vaishnavas in the doctrine of transformation. According to the Vaishnavas spiritual transformation is possible so that spirit may appear in concrete beatific form for scattering light and blessedness. But the Vaishnavas have kept the spiritual order separate and distinct from the physical order and no attempt was done to transform the physical order under the pressure of spirit. The physical was left untouched. No doubt in the excess of spiritual outflowing our physical being is affected, but no earnest attempt was done to transform the physical completely. Sri Aurobindo says that transformation is possible not only of the mental and higher sheaths, it is also possible of the vital and the physical sheaths. The world order has been created not to put us into conflicts, disturbances and sufferings. There is a purpose running through the world order—the divinisation of the whole creative order,—and that possibility can come only if we believe it, if we feel it and if we can establish in ourselves dynamic contact with the Divine. Therefore, his is transformation of the total man. In his “Life Divine” (Vol. III) he says time may come in our realisation when we shall feel contact through our entire being with the cosmic Reality. Ultimately, the regenerated man, the transformed man stands out free and is in touch with the Infinite in his integral being. Every movement is felt to be divine, even the minute movements. It is not merely purely a theoretical conception but something that is practically attainable. It is really the practice of the presence of God in all parts of being and in everything. We have the divine manifestation through our being if we only seek it. The

Divine is everywhere, there is no necessity of quitting this world to feel the Divine. The whole life is the movement of the divine. In the full development of Yoga, we shall have the divine wisdom, the divine life,—intellect will be influenced by transcendental wisdom, heart by cosmic feeling, will by cosmic impulsion and the cells by cosmic life. Such is his vision, and to this he is inviting our attention.

There is a natural reluctance to write anything positive about Sri Aurobindo's discipline. In me there is not the required competence. But we can draw an instructive comparison between the Tantric discipline and Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo's discipline is analogous to the Tantrik discipline. The Tantras trace out the path to cosmic consciousness by making active the sleeping psychic centres of our generally known as *chakras*. The Tantrik is anxious to open, the being in every direction, in power, knowledge, and blissfulness. Therefore, the Tantric system has attempted the ascent of the sleeping spiritual force, *Kundalini*, from the lowest point of the spinal cord to the cerebrum or *Sahasrara* through a passage, called *Susumna*. It may be called, in the Mother's language, *the sunlit path*. There a stream of energy and light is always flowing, and if we can enter into this light, a world of wonderful possibilities opens before us, and of that possibility there is no end. It requires the purification of thought, the purity of life, the purity of motives, and over and above, a high aspiration for the Divine. Sri Aurobindo says that with the aspiration the force immediately and invariably functions. Right aspiration acquaints us with the nature and functioning of the force. In the Tantras generally, this process has been helpful in the absorption of our consciousness in Brahman, and therefore, the path of the ascent has been so much emphasised because that is the path that can give us liberation from this world of creative mutation. The more we make ascent through the higher centres, the more our knowledge moves through subtler and subtler spheres; ultima-

tely a stage comes when we pass into the *Sahasrara* and attain the transcendental knowledge. Sri Aurobindo says that it is not only necessary that we should ascend but it is necessary that we should too descend, so that the whole circuit will be completed. This gives greater wisdom, because it allows deeper hold on our being. The adept can at will pass into Samadhi and at the same time can be active in the different planes of existence. The whole being is brought under the control, and the adept can easily and consciously move. Sri Aurobindo thinks that concentration or diffusion stands on the same level. They are phases of our being, and the true spiritual hero must be free and must not identify himself with spiritual concentration or diffusion. He stands detached to both, though he can either concentrate or expand according to choice.

In the Tantras, there are the path of Power and the path of Liberation. The path of liberation passes into silence by overriding the creative emergence of Prakriti. The path of Power takes us to over-mental or supra-mental spheres where our being finds utmost expansion beyond and therefrom he feels the divine immanence in the cosmic order. When the *Kundalini* passes into the *Sahasrara*, the Nirvanic Calm is attained. Purnananda, the great Bengalee Tantrik, makes *Sahasrara* the seat of Nirvan-sakti and Nirvan-kalā. There is another path in the Tantra which is called the path of *Bibhuti* or power which is acquired through the opening of "*Maha-Kundalini*," the path by which we can go beyond Samadhi and realise the divine spirit that has expressed itself through the world order. It is the path that comprises the integral Reality in our realisation; it keeps us conscious and alert at every stage of expression or concentration—so that it holds a better poise in being by not identifying with either absorption or expression. It is the path of wideness, vastness, cosmic wisdom and cosmic movement. Ascent gives us the knowledge of the higher spheres of subtler existences, descent is necessary because in it we come down with some power that we can catch hold of in our ascent, and this power

becomes cosmically effective and creative through us. Sri Aurobindo says that it is not enough to know the art of ascent only. When in our ascent, we get the iridescent light, it is then possible to descend with that light into the subtle labyrinthine depths of our existence and gradually remove the darkness from these places. With the supermental ascent, the limitation of our individuality is shaken off and it is possible to throw the higher light into every individual by the law of the identity of being which the free soul actually and positively feels. When this darkness, this ignorance is removed from man, the divine light fills him in every part of his being. Sri Aurobindo holds that there is a possibility of drawing down the divine power, not by rejecting this life—our day-to-day life,—but by meeting it everywhere in all spheres of our activities with the insight and skilfulness of the Master Artist.

A question may arise, is it possible for every man? Sri Aurobindo says it is possible alone through emergence of the cosmic power. It is the divine Art of life. The only thing that one has to do is to surrender oneself in every part of one's being to the Divine and allow It to work within him. He is to take a pure attitude of *Sakshi* and stand aside merely as a *Drasta*. When our surrender has been complete, and with the help of our aspiration, we gravitate towards God; God also gravitates towards us. That is the law of reciprocal attraction—a wonderful law in the occult world. When every part of our being has been surrendered—because every part of it has to be transformed the Divine Power takes hold of it, seizes it and infuses every part of our being with peace, light, life, bliss and power. Therefore, this transformation is not something that is done by us, but something that is done always through the intervention of the cosmic power. We have to be sincere in our aspiration—then the supramental transformation becomes possible. He says that the world order is tending towards that direction. But, of itself, it cannot go long in this way. There must be divine intervention. Serene Peace and sublime Silence introduce us to the supreme effulgence which spreads out through the whole exis-

tence. With complete transformation the supreme Glory will be perceived to be moving archangels and angels, the devas and men, Light, to be moving from soul to soul, Love, to be exalting us in infinite beatitude, Life, to be moving in joyousness. If that transformation comes, it will not be merely a transformation of an individual being ; it will be a collective transformation. Sri Aurobindo does not, like the Vedantists of old, want *Jivan-mukti*. He wants to accelerate the creative evolution to a higher pitch by bringing down the force of supreme Effulgence into the creative order which by its obscurity and inertia cannot reflect it, far less incorporate it in its being. His Yoga connects the creative and the non-creative plane and helps to wipe off the obscurities of being invigorating it with a new life-force and illuminating it with the undiminished light of Spirit.

What he stands for is universal transformation. He, therefore, says that if only one centre has rightly collected himself and has got touch of that Divine Power in his heart of hearts, other centres catch the splendour and influence of that Divine Light and Power. He envisages a gnostic society which, sooner or later, will come into being. Although each member of that society will be embracing different aspects of life, the ultimate harmony will not be affected ; and races of men as representing the Divine will come to know one other better. This will be implanting the Divine Life on Earth, filling it with Divine Peace, Wisdom, Bliss, and Power. The more this Truth is realised, the more it becomes dynamic in us and moves us to make it living in our life.

MAHENDRA NATH SIRCAR

Sri Aurobindo and the Gita

Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* is not a mere philosophical treatise, though it gives, for the first time, a clear exposition of the synthetic Vedanta of the Gita. The Gita "is not, as the commentators strive to make it, framed or intended to support any exclusive school of philosophical thought or to put forward predominantly the claims of any one form of Yoga . . . but rather there is a wide, undulating, encircling movement of ideas which is the manifestation of a vast synthetic mind and a rich synthetic experience." Sri Aurobindo has brought out the full implications of this synthesis ; but like the Gita itself, his eye is more on the enduring truths of spiritual experience and the verifiable facts of our highest psychological possibilities than on the philosophical theory behind them. Sri Aurobindo's exposition of this great ancient scripture not only gives the highest satisfaction to the modern intellect, but also touches the soul of the reader moving it to a vision of the truth and communicating a spiritual force by which one is helped to realise it in life. It is not really a commentary, but a restatement of the living and eternal message of the Gita in a language which vibrates with the *mantra śakti* of the revealed word.

One outstanding feature of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Gita is that he has not sought by it to give an exposition of his own philosophy¹ and his own Yoga as Shankara and other commentators have done. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, if we can say so, stands on a different level from that of the Gita, and there is a corresponding difference in the philosophical outlook. But when interpreting the Gita, Sri Aurobindo has kept his own outlook behind and given a faithful account of the view of the Gita itself. We have not noticed any other commentator of the

¹ Sri Aurobindo's own philosophy is to be found in his *magnum opus*, "The Life Divine."

Gita doing the same thing. Thus Shankara's famous *bhāṣya* on the Gita is really an exposition of his own unique Jnana Yoga, which differs from the synthetic Yoga of the Gita in essential respects. "Shankara", says Swami Vivekananda, "sometimes resorts to sophistry in order to prove that the ideas in the books go to uphold his philosophy." This is very much evident in his interpretation of the Gita as I have shown in detail in my Bengali commentary on the Gita.

About the object of his interpretation of the Gita, Sri Aurobindo himself says in the *Essays on the Gita*: "The Gita in the development of its idea raises many issues, such as the determinism of Nature, the significance of the universal manifestation and the ultimate status of the liberated soul, questions that have been the subject of unending and inconclusive debate. It is not necessary in this series of essays of which the object is a scrutiny and positive affirmation of the substance of the Gita and a disengaging of its contribution to the abiding spiritual thought of humanity and its kernel of living practice, to enter far into these discussions or to consider where we may differ from its standpoint or conclusions, make any reserves in our assent or even, strong in later experience, go beyond its metaphysical teaching or its Yoga. It will be sufficient to close with a formulation of the living message it still brings for man the eternal seeker and discoverer to guide him through the present circuits and the possible steeper ascent of his life up to the luminous heights of his spirit." To all those who cannot go through the two series of the *Essays*, we recommend the last chapter where Sri Aurobindo delivers in his own inspiring words the eternal message of the Gita.

When we say that Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is different from that of the Gita, we do not mean that there is any conflict between the two; the latter can very well be a beginning of the former, and the synthesis of the Gita may be taken broadly as a starting point of the new and greater synthesis of Sri Aurobindo, just as the Gita itself started from the Vedantic synthesis of the Upanishads and "built upon the basis of its

essential ideas another harmony of the three great means and powers, Love, Knowledge and Works through which the soul of man can directly approach and cast itself into the Eternal." The Gita's Yoga is a graded discipline by which the individual can advance towards the spiritual goal: Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, on the other hand, has for its aim not only the liberation and perfection of the individual, but the bringing down of a new spiritual light and power on the earth which will open to all individuals of the human race the possibilities of a divine life hitherto never realised on the earth. Comparing his Yoga with that of the Gita, Sri Aurobindo himself writes: "The ordinary life consists in work for personal aim and satisfaction of desire under some mental or moral control, touched sometimes by a mental ideal. The Gita's Yoga consists in the offering of one's work as a sacrifice to the Divine, the conquest of desire, egoless and desireless action, bhakti for the Divine, an entering into the cosmic consciousness, the sense of unity with all creatures, oneness with the Divine. This Yoga adds the bringing down of the supramental Light and Force (its ultimate aim) and the transformation of the nature." (*Lights on Yoga*). The Gita's Yoga shows to what spiritual heights man can rise individually at the present stage of the evolution of the human race, how he can make his body, life and mind the instruments of a spiritual living and spiritual action; Sri Aurobindo's Yoga wants to advance man a further step in the evolution so that he may go beyond the mind and develop higher instruments of world-knowledge and world action. When the supramental principle will be established on the earth, men will not have to go individually through all the labour of spiritual perfection which is necessary at present.

The Gita does not refer explicitly to such a consummation of the human race, though there are hints about it here and there; the immediate task before the Gita was not to open up the vision of a supramental race, but to pave the way for its appearance by counteracting the tendency to renounce life and work which was being encouraged by the Buddhist and

other ascetic disciplines. That is why the Gita begins with Arjuna's dejection which raises the whole question of human life and action ; the whole exposition of the Gita revolves and completes its cycle round this original question of Arjuna. The enigma which the Gita starts to solve is the apparently insuperable difficulty of living in the highest self and spirit while yet we continue to do works of the world. "The easiest way is to give up the problem as insoluble, life and action as an illusion or an inferior movement of existence to be abandoned as soon as we can rise out of the snare of the world into the truth of spiritual being. That is the ascetic solution, if it can be called a solution." All ancient commentators of the Gita have regarded this as the solution given by the Gita, and they have interpreted the Gita in that light. This has been possible as the Gita does not at all deny the efficacy of the ascetic renunciation of life for its own purpose ; "but it sees that that cuts instead of loosening the knot of the riddle and therefore it accounts it an inferior method and holds its own for the better way." (5/2 ; 12/5). The Gita shows the possibility of reconciling the full active life of man with the inner life in the highest self and spirit and it advances that as the real solution of the problem of terrestrial human life, *ihaiva*. Both the path of the ascetics and that of the Gita "lead us out of the lower ignorant normal nature of man to the pure spiritual consciousness" and so the Gita regards them both as one in essence ; and that is why the ascetic commentators can cite texts from the Gita to show that it really teaches their path. But, as a matter of fact, where the ascetic path stops short and turns back, the path of the Gita "advances with a firm subtlety and high courage, opens a gate on unexplored vistas, completes man in God and unites and reconciles in the Spirit soul and Nature." It is this supreme secret, *uttamam rahasyam*, of the Gita which has for the first time been revealed by Sri Aurobindo. The Gita, like the ascetics, teaches *vairāgya*, but by it the Gita does not mean a disgust of life or distaste for the world—the common significance of the term—but renunciation of *rāga*, as also of its opposite,

dveṣa. The Gita advises a continual resort to meditation, *dhyānayoga-paro nityam*, as "the firm means by which the soul of man can realise its self of Power and its self of Silence. And yet there must be no abandonment of the active life for a life of pure meditation; action must always be done as a sacrifice to the supreme Spirit (18/56). This movement in the path of Sannyasa prepares an absorbed disappearance of the individual in the Eternal, and renunciation of action and life in the world is an indispensable step in the process. But in the Gita's path of Tyaga it is a preparation rather for the turning of our whole life and existence and of all action into an integral oneness with the serene and immeasurable being, consciousness and will of the Divine, and it preludes and makes possible a vast and total passing upward of the soul out of the lower ego to the inexpressible perfection of the supreme spiritual nature, *parā prakṛti*."

This highest message of the Gita, however, is meant only for the chosen few; for the rest of the race "it prescribes only a gradual advance, to be wisely effected by following out faithfully with more and more of intelligence and moral purpose and with a final turn to spirituality the law of their nature." That is why the Gita has a different message for minds in different stages of development (see *Essays on the Gita*, Second Series, pp. 462-465). Even Arjuna found it difficult to understand and accept the highest message. He said: "This Yoga of the nature of equality which has been described by Thee, O Madhusudana, I see no stable foundation for it owing to restlessness." It is this difficulty of reconciling soul and Nature, of life and spirituality, that has led to a divorce of the two, leading on the one hand to the refusal of the ascetic and on the other to the materialist denial. As Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, "it is only the very highest supramental Force descending from above and opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical Nature and annihilate its difficulties." (*The Mother*). The Gita does not explicitly refer to the supramental Force, though it is implied in its distinction of the two Natures, *parā* and *aparā*: but it

has shown that individuals can, by a complete surrender to the Divine, realise a spiritual life even in this material body ; and "if there is hope for man, why should there not be hope for mankind?"

It is chiefly due to Shankara's interpretation of the Gita that the Indians have not been able to understand its message of the spiritualisation of life and action. According to Shankara, this world and our life in it is a creation of falsehood, of *Maya*, by which he means a power which creates an appearance of the world, though there is no such thing in reality ; once we accept this view of creation, we have to give up all hope of realising a truly divine life and divine action. But in the Gita we nowhere find such a conception of *Maya*. *Maya* according to the Gita is the lower prakriti of the three gunas which bewilders the human soul, and prevents it from knowing its true nature and also the true nature of the world ; it has nowhere been ascribed the power of creating a false world altogether ; it can only create a false view of the world and of things in the world. The creation of the world, according to the Gita, is the work of the Para Prakriti working under the presiding control of the Lord himself (9/10). Identifying himself with his own Prakriti, the Lord says, "I am the birth of the whole world and so too its dissolution" (7/6). Again he says, "Leaning upon my own Nature I create all this multitude of existences." (9/8). The "own Nature" of the Divine cannot be a *Maya* creating only illusions. So the Gita leaves no doubt that the world is a real creation, and that the Divine himself is the seed which develops into all these multitude existences (7/10). Shankara finds nowhere a single sloka in the Gita which can be interpreted to mean that this world is not real. But the Gita has made a distinction between *jñāna* and *ajñāna*, Knowledge and Ignorance : that, says Shankara in his commentary on sloka 2, chapter 13, is sufficient for his purpose, he can deduce his whole *Mayavada* from that distinction alone. *Ajnana*, says he, is *Avidya*, and it is this *Avidya* or *Maya* which creates the appearance of a world in Brahman, just as we mistake a rope for a snake. The Gita says,

“All things are eternally born from him, upborne in his eternity, taken eternally back into his oneness” (13/17). Here the Gita leaves absolutely no doubt that the world is a real and eternally recurring process. But Shankara, in his commentary on this sloka, quietly brings in his pet example of the snake and the rope; as when a man mistakes a rope for a snake, the rope is the creator, upholder and destroyer of the illusion of the snake, so is Brahman in relation to the world; that is to say, Brahman like the rope, is ever what he is, there is never really a creation of the world, but Avidya creates an illusory world and covers Brahman with it. But why does not the Gita use any simile which can give the least hint that this world is unreal or illusory? Let us quote here some of the illustrations used by the Gita to show the relation between the world and God or Brahman, the ultimate Reality. “There is nothing else supreme beyond Me, O Dhananjaya. On Me all that is here is strung like pearls upon a thread” (7/7). “It is as the great, the all-pervading aerial principle dwells in the etheric that all creatures dwell in Me, that is how you have to conceive of it” (9/6). “I will again declare the supreme Knowledge, the highest of all knowledge. . . . My womb is the Mahad Brahman; into that I cast the seed; thence spring all beings, O Bharata” (14/1, 3). The last example of the seed the Gita gives four times; and a tree growing out of a seed is not an unreality or an illusion as a snake imagined on a rope. Shankara argues that the seed grows and develops into the tree; but Atman or Brahman is immutable and unchangeable, so Brahman cannot change into or become the world. But the immutability refers to the essence of Brahman; though Brahman takes many forms, it always remains essentially the same just as gold remains cent per cent gold though it is made into various kinds of ornaments. The very term *bhūta* means that the world is a real becoming of Brahman and not a mere illusion. Shankara also refers to the sloka of the Gita where it is said, “That which really is, cannot go out of existence, just as that which is non-existence cannot come into being” (2/16). He argues that as the world and things in the

world go out of existence, they cannot be real. But referring to the second part of the same sentence we can argue that the world has come into being, it is a fact of experience, so it cannot be non-existent ; so Shankara says, the world is neither real nor unreal, it is *anirvacanīyā* and that is also the nature of the Maya or Avidya which creates this world. But here Shankara goes against the law of contradiction, which he is so ready to apply whenever it suits him ; how can anything be real and unreal at the same time? So his explanation is no explanation at all. The truth about the matter, as implied in the teaching of the Gita, is that the world never goes out of existence ; it only passes from the manifest state to the unmanifest state, again to be manifested from that unmanifest condition, just as the tree unmanifest in the seed becomes manifest. So there is no necessity of resorting to the theory of Illusion or Maya in explaining the world, and the Gita has certainly not done that.

Still the chief difficulty raised by Shankara remains. That the *jīva* or individual soul is subject to ignorance or *ajñāna* is admitted by everybody ; otherwise all shastra of bondage and liberation becomes useless, and the Gita itself becomes otiose. Whose is this ignorance and wherefrom does it come? There is one Reality only, Brahman, and that is pure consciousness, *viññāna*, and there cannot be any trace of ignorance in that consciousness. Thus Ignorance is unreal, still it is there and is the source of bondage and suffering from which we seek liberation. Shankara says he means nothing more than this by his Mayavada. We admit that the Gita does not enter into this question, and different schools of interpreters have given different solutions of this problem. Our contention is that Shankara's explanation is no explanation ; as Vivekananda put it, Mayavada is not a theory, it is the statement of a fact ; we would add to this that as a statement of fact it is incomplete and partial and therefore misleading and erroneous. The Brahman, the world, the Jiva with its bondage and liberation are real ; experience, reason and the *śruti* all testify to this,

vāsudevah sarvam. And these present a real problem which will not be solved by denying reality to any of them as Shankara has done. By that you cut the knot and do not loosen it. Shankara says that only the silent, inactive, nirguna Brahman is real; everything else is a falsehood created by Maya. Acharyas like Bhaskara and Ramanuja devoted great dialectic skill to show that Shankara's speculations are absolutely unwarranted by *śruti* and reasoning and are opposed to all metaphysical truths and religious values. The main object of Bhaskara's philosophy from the negative point of view was his condemnation of *māyāvāda* as a version of the Nihilism of Mahayanika Buddhism. According to Bhaskara, "Reality is both one and many (*abhinna* and *bhinna*). The one is the unconditioned absolute and the uncaused cause, but the manifold is the absolute conditioned by the Upadhis or the de-limiting adjuncts. The absolute becomes the relative and is immanent in it. The finite self is the one Brahman limited by the metaphysical and moral imperfections of *avidyā*, *kāma* and *karma*. *Mukti* consists in removing the barriers, transcending the boundaries of *saṃsāramaṇḍala* and becoming one with the absolute or attaining *Ekibhava*." (*The Philosophy of Bhedābheda* by P. N. Srinivasachari). Thus ignorance belongs to the finite self, it does not touch Brahman who transcends the world of conditions. Brahman manifests himself as the finite world but is not exhausted by it, thus he remains free from the imperfections of the finite. This argument which seeks to prove the being whose nature is absolutely uniform light to be differentiated by limiting adjuncts is according to Ramanuja fallacious, for "obscuration of the light of that which is nothing but light means destruction of that light." Thus he asserts that the *jīva* is essentially different from Brahman; it is subject to ignorance on account of *anādi* or beginningless *karma*. In this way Ramanuja preserves the purity of Brahman. But his device is not wholly successful, as he regards *jīva* as a sort of part of Brahman; the *jīva* has its place within the being of Brahman, though it is essentially different from it. This brings in *svagata bheda*, and also duality, though Ramanuja calls his system a

kind of *advaita*. Madhwa follows Ramanuja's view to its logical conclusion and says that the Jiva and the world are eternally different and separate from Brahman. But this contradicts the great Vedantic saying that Reality is one without a second. Thus we come back to Shankara's Monism with Maya as a sort of a nightmare in the Infinite.

So far there is no solution of the problem of Knowledge and Ignorance, and the Gita, as we have said before, does not enter into the question at all. It gives an account of the world process based on the Upanishads, but does not proceed to answer all the questions the human mind can raise about it. Any attempt to put the philosophy of the Gita into a trenchant and rigid mental formula is bound to lead to a twisting of the plain slokas of the Gita, and that is what has actually happened. "Its aim", says Sri Aurobindo, "is precisely the opposite to that of the polemist commentators who found this Scripture as one of the three highest Vedantic authorities and attempted to turn it into a weapon of offence and defence against other schools and systems. The Gita is not a weapon for dialectical warfare; it is a gate opening on the whole world of spiritual truth and experience and the view it gives us embraces all the provinces of that supreme region. It maps out, but it does not cut up or build walls or hedges to confine our vision."

That the Gita does not want to follow the ordinary logical method, but wants us to rise to a higher spiritual vision is evidenced from its use of apparently self-contradictory phrases to express its thought. Thus the Lord says: "Know Me for the doer of this (the fourfold law of human workings) who am yet the imperishable non-doer" (4/13). "All existences are situated in Me, not I in them. And yet all existences are not situated in Me, behold My divine Yoga" (9/4, 5). "The eternal supreme Brahman called neither Sat nor Asat." Shankara says that even the word of God is not to be accepted if it goes against reason; so he has explained away these apparent contradictions by saying that of two contradictory predications only one is true and the other refers only to appearance created by

Maya. Thus according to him, Brahman is the imperishable non-doer, and never really the doer. But this goes against the whole teaching of the Gita.

There is nothing in the sayings of the Lord in the Gita which is against reason; only we have to remember that when we are dealing with the Infinite, we must not depend on a reason which is appropriate only for dealing with finite things. With a more catholic reason we shall find the apparent contradictions to be only complementaries. Sri Krishna declares himself to be the Purushottama than whom there is nothing higher or greater (7/7); and describing the supreme Brahman in chapter 13, he calls it *nirguṇa* and at the same time enjoyer of all *guṇas* (13/15). Shankara says that the Supreme is really *nirguṇa*, inactive, ever without any form or feature or action. In this interpretation the Avatar who is the teacher of the Gita and the whole teaching become a work of Maya and therefore unreal and false. And Shankara puts forward this as the most consistent and reasonable interpretation of the Gita! As a matter of fact, the Gita following the Upanishads regards the Parabrahman, the Parameshwara, the Paramatman as both *sagūṇa* and *nirguṇa*, active and inactive, featureless and with features. As the logical reason cannot reconcile itself to such self-contradictions, Shankara has regarded the *sagūṇa* aspect as unreal, while the Vaishnavite commentators have ignored the *nirguṇa* aspect, and thus both have missed the integral teaching of the Gita. That is why the Gita itself says that the integral knowledge of the Divine Reality is very rare: "Among thousands of men one here and there strives after perfection and of those who strive and attain to perfection one here and there knows Me in all the principles of my existence" (7/3). It is Sri Aurobindo who has for the first time shown how the Gita has reconciled all these apparent contradictions by its great conception of the Purushottama and its distinction of the two Natures, *parā* and *aparā*. Shankara's account of these great concepts of the Gita is most confusing as he has missed their true import, and in this respect the other schools also have done nothing

better. Thus Shankara calls the *parā prakṛti* the Puruṣa ! His attempt to read his own Mayavada into the Gita has brought him to this absurdity of saying that Ishwara has two natures, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, *prakṛtim puruṣam caiva īśvarasya prakṛtī tau* (13/19). Shankara cannot accept that there is a higher Prakṛiti than the *triguṇamayī aparā prakṛti* to which the Gita gives the name Maya. Again he says that *parā prakṛti* is the *kṣetrajña* (7/5); in another place he says, Brahman itself is called *kṣetrajña* when it is associated with the *upādhi* of Kṣetra created by Maya (13/2). Thus it comes to this that there is really no difference between Brahman and *parā prakṛti*, they refer to the same thing; then why does the Gita make these distinctions? According to the Gita it is the higher spiritual prakṛiti of the Supreme that is the creator of the world, and it is this Prakṛiti which becomes the spiritual nature of every individual *Jīva*, *Jivabhūtā*. The Gita says that Para Prakṛiti becomes the Jīva, not that she is the Jīva as the commentators have held. This essential spiritual nature of the Jīva is manifesting itself by a gradual process of evolution; until this evolution is completed, the soul lives and works in the lower Prakṛiti of the three guṇas, and that explains the ignorance and suffering of the human soul. The Gita gives a practical discipline by which the human soul can rise out of the lower life into the higher spiritual life, and attain *sādharmya*, *madbhāva*, that is the spiritual divine nature. Thus the distinction made between the two Natures, the phenomenal and the spiritual Nature, is the practical basis of all the Yoga of the Gita; to miss the significance of this distinction is to miss the core of the teaching of the Gita.

Another cardinal doctrine of the Gita is the distinction between the three Puruṣas, or rather the three statuses of the one Uttama Puruṣa, the Puruṣottama. The Akshara and the Kshara Puruṣa are respectively the static and the dynamic aspects of the Puruṣottama who is the supreme Brahman. But Shankara cannot accept this, as according to him the static aspect alone is real; so he explains away this distinction in a

most fanciful way. He says that the Akshara Purusha is the Mayashakti of God (15/6). Thus according to him *parā prakṛti* is Brahman, Akshara Purusha is Maya (*i.e.*, *aparā prakṛti*) and Kshara Purusha is the resulting world of mutable beings. This is what we can call confusion worst confounded. In his commentary on the third sloka of the seventh chapter, Shankara himself says that Akshara is the supreme Self and the supreme Brahman. The secret of Shankara's great influence is not that he has given, as many claim, the most consistent interpretation of the Vedantic texts ; it lies in his own philosophy of the Maya which seemed to have a peculiar fascination for the Indian mind, prepared as it had been for this by centuries of Buddhism. The system itself is one of the highest philosophical constructions of the human mind. If we accept Shankara's premise (which is no doubt based on his own spiritual experience) that Reality is something static, immobile, featureless, something which is an ever undifferentiated unity in which there is no place for motion or multiplicity or attributes, then we are bound to hold this world-play to be an illusion, a mere appearance which has absolutely no basis in reality. This idea of the illusoriness of the world was being preached by the Buddhists, and we see it refuted in the Brahma Sutras. Shankara accepted it with a slight modification, giving some empirical reality to the world and using the word Maya to describe and explain the illusory creation. But this word has nowhere been used in the Vedas and the Upanishads or in the Gita to denote a power which creates an illusory world ; as we have said above, this conception of the illusoriness of the world was an invention of the Buddhists, and it was Nagarjuna, a Buddhist philosopher of the second century, who first used the word Maya to denote a power of illusory creation. Shankara adopted this in the eighth century ; ever since it has remained as an obsession of the Indian mind.

In the Gita the word Maya has been used in the sense of a power of ignorance ; bewildered by this power the soul sees only multiplicity in the world and does not see the underlying

unity, does not see the Divine as the source and sustainer of the world. By divine grace one can transcend this Maya and see the world in its true light (7/13, 14). When the Maya is removed, the world does not disappear, but is seen as the manifestation of the Divine, and the Jiva realises his essential unity with the Divine and with all other creatures; that vision becomes then the basis of his life and action in the world, and that is the goal which the Gita has held before man. "When he perceives the diversified existence of beings abiding in the one eternal Being, and spreading forth from it, then he attains to Brahman" (13/31). "The Yogin who has taken his stand upon oneness and loves Me in all beings, however and in all ways he lives and acts, lives and acts in Me" (6/31).

In one fundamental point Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Gita agrees with that of Shankara and differs from the Vaishnavite commentators; it is this that the Jiva or the individual soul is no other than the Brahman itself; the Lord says in the Gita that the Jiva is a portion of himself (15/7); but as the Divine Reality is not something divisible, a portion of the Divine can be nothing else than the Divine himself in some self-limited power. Indeed the Gita leaves no doubt about it when the Lord says, "Understand Me as the Knower of the Field in all Fields" (13/3). But according to Shankara the field is only an illusion created by Maya, even Brahman is never really a knower; Brahman is pure *vijñāna*, and has not even the activity of knowing. But the words of the Gita certainly cannot bear such an interpretation. Here also we find the influence of Buddhist thought on Shankara; indeed in an unguarded moment Shankara himself has admitted it when he cites the view of the Vijnanabadi Buddhists in support of his own view (see his commentary on 18/50).

But if Brahman really becomes so many Jivas with so many bodies in the world and involved in ignorance, does it not lose its unity and its purity of knowledge and consciousness? How can the one be many, knowledge be ignorance? How can we accept such self-contradictions even if they be asserted in the

scriptures? And why does Brahman assume these imperfections and limitations? These are questions which the Gita has left unanswered, and Sri Aurobindo does not enter into them in his interpretation of the Gita. But he has fully answered these questions in *The Life Divine* following a method of comprehensive and catholic reasoning appropriate to such subjects. Let us quote here a passage from that book as an illustration of what we mean:

“The Absolute neither creates nor is created,—in the current sense of making or being made; we can speak of creation only in the sense of the Being becoming in form and movement what it already is in substance and status. Yet we have to emphasise its indeterminability in that special and positive sense, not as a negation but as an indispensable condition of its free infinite self-determination, because without that the Reality would be a fixed eternal determinate¹ or else an indeterminate fixed and bound to a sum of possibilities of determination inherent within it. Its freedom from all limitation, from any binding by its own creation cannot be itself turned into a limitation, an absolute incapacity, a denial of all freedom of self-determination; it is this that would be a contradiction, it would be an attempt to define and limit by negation the infinite and illimitable. Into the central fact of the two sides of the nature of the Absolute, the essential and the self-creative or dynamic, no real contradiction enters; it is only a pure infinite essence that can formulate itself in infinite ways. One statement is complementary to the other, there is no mutual cancellation, no incompatibility; it is only the dual statement of a single inescapable fact by human reason in human language.” (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, pp. 58-59). “A solely silent and static Infinite, an Infinite without an infinite power and dynamis and energy is inadmissible except as the perception of an aspect; a powerless Absolute, an impotent Spirit is unthinkable: and infinite energy must be the dynamis of the

¹ The Saguna Brahman of the Vaishnava commentators.



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Morning *darshan*
of the Mother
(Inside the Asram)

Morning *darshan*
of the Mother
(To the public)





Dining Hall



Meditation
Courtyard

(below Mother's room)



Meditation
Courtyard

(another view)

Meditation
Courtyard

(full view)



Infinite, an all-power must be the potency of the Absolute, an illimitable force must be the force of the Spirit. But the silence, the status are the basis of the movement, an eternal immobility is the necessary condition, field, essence even, of the infinite mobility, a stable being is the condition and foundation of the vast action of the Force of being. It is when we arrive at something of this silence, stability, immobility that we can base on it a force and energy which in our superficial restless state would be inconceivable. The opposition we make is mental and conceptual; in reality, the silence of the Spirit and the dynamis of the Spirit are complementary truths and inseparable. These things may be difficult for us to understand because our own surface finite capacity in either direction is limited and our conceptions are based on our limitations; but it should be easy to see that these relative and finite conceptions do not apply to the Absolute and Infinite" (*Ibid.*, pp. 63, 64).

If the silent, immobile, inactive aspect of the Absolute be the only Reality, as Shankara supposes, then all activity and movement becomes a falsehood; and any one who realises the truth can have no activity. That is why Shankara insists that in order to realise the truth and attain liberation, one must give up all action. Indeed in his commentary on the first sloka of the fifth chapter he says that Karmayoga is based on false knowledge, and that all action is incompatible with knowledge. But the Gita certainly does not hold this view; it speaks of the action of the liberated man, *muktasya karma*. "The Gita insists that we can and should, while we live, be conscious in the self and its silence and yet act with power in the world of Nature. And it gives the example of the Divine himself who is not bound by necessity of birth, but free, superior to the cosmos, and yet abides in action" (*Essays on the Gita*, Vol. II, p. 268). Thus Shankara's doctrine that work is incompatible with knowledge is itself sufficient to prove that his philosophy is not the philosophy of the Gita. So Shankara has made every attempt to show that the Gita really teaches renunciation of work and life.

According to him the Gita insists on work only as a preliminary discipline for the purification of the *citta* ; when thus prepared, one gives up all activity and gets liberation through knowledge. In his commentary on the 27th sloka of the 5th chapter, Shankara emphatically says that the Gita has taught at every step this necessity of the giving up of work. As a matter of fact, the Gita has nowhere given this doctrine of purification through action leading to actionlessness and knowledge as its own teaching ; it is Shankara who has repeated this "at every step" in his commentary on the Gita in order to impress on the mind of the reader that this is really the teaching of the Gita. Let us give here a few examples illustrating how Shankara reads his own thought into the slokas of the Gita. In the fifth chapter the Lord, explaining how Yoga of works is distinguished above the renunciation of work, says, "The sage who has Yoga attains soon to the Brahman". Here Yoga means Karmayoga, and it is clear that it is not meant only for the ignorant, it is performed even by sages. But Shankara cannot accept the saying that by performing Karmayoga one can soon attain Brahman ; so he says that here by the term Brahman we have to understand not Brahman but *sannyāsa* ; that is to say, by performing Karmayoga one gets the fitness for *sannyasa*, and then by *sannyasa* attains Brahman or liberation! The Gita has vindicated works done as a sacrifice as a means of liberation and absolute spiritual perfection, *saṁsiddhi*. It gives the examples of Janaka and other great Karmayogins who attained to perfection by equal and desireless works done as a sacrifice without the least egoistic aim or attachment. This does not agree with the view of Shankara ; so he says that they did work for self-purification and afterwards attained *saṁsiddhi* through Jnana. Referring to the spiritual man who lives in the peace and the joy of the self, the Gita says he has nothing to gain by action, but nothing also to gain by inaction (3/18), and it is not at all for any personal object that he has to make his choice. This does not suit Shankara ; so he interprets the sloka in his own way thus: the liberated man has nothing to gain by

action and *nothing to lose by inaction*. But the Gita here speaks only of gain and not of loss. The Gita really teaches a synthesis of knowledge and work, they are the two wings of the soul's ascent ; it nowhere says that works are incompatible with knowledge ; on the contrary, Karmayoga, according to the Gita, can be perfected only by knowledge. "Therefore, having cut asunder with the sword of knowledge this doubt that has arisen out of ignorance and abides in the heart, resort to Yoga, do thou stand up, O Bharata" (4/42). Shankara interprets this in his own way—"Destroying doubts by the knowledge of the identity of Jiva and Brahman, do Karmayoga as a means of acquiring knowledge"! The Gita has said again and again that when action is done with knowledge it does not create any bondage ; Shankara explains that a liberated man does not act, but if he acts moved by the praise or blame of other people, he is not bound by that action, that action of his is no action at all (4/20). But how can a liberated man be moved by praise or blame? Shankara's attempt to interpret the Gita as a scripture of his own Jnanayoga has involved him in many such absurdities.

The Vaishnavite interpreters of the Gita accept a synthesis of works and knowledge, but they subordinate both to devotion which according to them is the most potent means for liberation. This follows from their conception of the ultimate Reality as the saguna Brahman, a personal God with infinite auspicious qualities, and of the Jiva as being something eternally different from him, but wholly dependent on him. The Gita no doubt regards the Jiva as eternal, *sanātana*. "It is evidently this idea of the eternal individual which leads the Gita to avoid any expression at all suggestive of a complete dissolution, *laya*, and to speak rather of the highest state of the soul as a dwelling in the Purushottama, *nivasiṣyasi mayyeva*". Still, as we have said above, the Gita does not regard the Jiva as being essentially different from the Divine Purusha ; the view of the Gita is "that there is an eternal, a real and not only an illusive principle of multiplicity in the spiritual being of the one divine

Existence." Thus though the Gita lays stress on devotion, it bases it on a knowledge of essential identity with the Divine. Comparing the four kinds of devotees, the Lord says, "Of these the knower, who is ever in constant union with the Divine, whose bhakti is all concentrated on Him is the best; he loves Me perfectly and is My beloved" (7/17). "The *Jñānī* (knower) is verily My self" (7/18). "This Lord", says Sri Aurobindo, "is the Self in whom all knowledge culminates and the Master of sacrifice to whom all works lead as well as the Lord of Love into whose being the heart of devotion enters, and the Gita preserves a perfectly equal balance, emphasising now knowledge, now works, now devotion, but for the purposes of the immediate trend of the thought, not with any absolute separate preference of one over the others. He in whom all three meet and become one, He is the Supreme Being, the Purushottama."

The modern mind, influenced by the activism of the West, finds in the Gita a Gospel of Works; it gives a subordinate place to its elements of knowledge and devotion. The Gita says, "Yoga is skill in works"; eminent modern scholars interpret it as meaning that the skilful doing of any work is the Karma-yoga of the Gita! And those who want a philosophical basis for the modern ideal of social service and humanitarian effort, curiously find it in Shankara's Mayavadic interpretation of the philosophy of the Gita. Thus one writer says: "We shall take Shankara's Advaitism, but not his dominating Karma-sannyas.¹ For in Shankara's Advaitism combined with Karmayoga as conceived in the Gita, we have the message of the highest good and quality to give to our disheartened countrymen; so that even the butcher in his *duty* may know of his right to nothing short of self-realisation just as much as the hermit of the woods." Certainly a butcher doing his work can attain perfection, but then his work must be done as a sacrifice to the Divine without the least egoistic aim or attachment (3/19); and this is not possible until one has a knowledge of the Self. And this know-

¹ This is also the standpoint of Tilak's interpretation of the Gita in his famous "Gita-rahasya."

ledge must be not only of the static Self, as Shankara sees it, it must be of the Purushottama who has both the static and the dynamic as two aspects. Western philosophers like Schopenhauer and Deussen find in the Vedanta the real basis of morality and social service. But as by the Vedanta they understand the Advaita of Shankara, they do not find in it sufficient incentive to morality and action ; Shankara's view that work is only for the benighted and the ignorant, they say, takes away "marrow and force from work and life in this world". But the Vedantic truth of the identity of all souls with Brahman is the highest justification of all moral action. Why should we love and serve our neighbour? Because thy neighbour is in truth thy very self and what separates you from him is mere illusion. So Deussen suggests a synthesis of Christian morality and Vedantic knowledge, and this is the view that has influenced modern Vedantists in India. But if the Self alone be real and everything else be an illusion, and that Self be eternally immobile and inactive, as Shankara says, wherefrom will the man of realisation and knowledge get any impulse to act in the world and serve the world? In this respect Shankara preaching renunciation of life and work was quite consistent in his philosophy.¹ Only when we realise the Supreme to be both static and dynamic, we can divinely act and live in the world in conscious and intimate union with Him, and that is the teaching of the Gita.

In our ordinary social and philanthropic activity, we are egoistic ; we think that we are serving our family or our country or humanity ; this egoism is the knot of ignorance which keeps us bound to all the imperfections of life. By realising the silent witness Self in us we must get rid of this egoism ; and that is the first step, in this there is no conflict between the teaching of the Gita and that of Shankara ; but the Gita does not stop there. When we realise that all our actions are done by Prakriti and that we are only the witness, we have to offer all those actions of Prakriti in us to the Lord of Prakriti who is the Lord and

¹ Though his own extraordinary life of activity contradicted his philosophy.

source of us all ; then through our nature, from which egoism has been uprooted, the will of the Lord will find fulfilment in the world, and we shall be Karmayogins in the true sense of the term. Let us conclude by giving in Sri Aurobindo's own words a brief outline of the path of the Gita :

“ Man as the individual self, owing to his ignorant self-identification with the work and the becoming, as if that were all his soul and not a power of his soul, a power proceeding from it, is bewildered by the ego-sense. He is enslaved by the gunas, now hampered in the dull case of *tamas*, now blown by the strong winds of *rajas*, now limited by the partial lights of *sattwa*, not distinguishing himself at all from the nature-mind which alone is thus modified by the gunas. He is therefore mastered by pain and pleasure, happiness and grief, desire and passion, attachment and disgust ; he has no freedom. He must, to be free, get back from the Nature action to the status of the Akshara ; he will then be *triguṇātīta*, beyond the gunas. Knowing himself as the Akshara Brahman, the unchanging Purusha, he will know himself as an immutable impersonal self, the Atman, tranquilly observing and impartially supporting the action, but himself calm, indifferent, untouched, motionless, pure, one with all beings in their self, not one with Nature and her workings. . .

“ Is this the last state, the utmost possibility, the highest secret? It cannot be, since this is a mixed or divided, not a perfectly harmonised status, a double, not a unified being, a freedom in the soul, and imperfection in the nature. It can only be a stage. What then is there beyond it? One solution is that of the Sannyasin who rejects the nature, the action altogether, so far at least as action can be rejected, so that there may be an unmixed undivided freedom ; but this solution, though admitted, is not preferred by the Gita. The Gita also insists on the giving up of actions, *sarva-karmāṇi sannyasya*, but inwardly to the Brahman. Brahman in the Kshara supports wholly the action of Prakriti, Brahman in the Akshara, even while supporting, dissociates itself from the action, preserves its freedom ; the individual soul, unified with the Brahman in the

Akshara, is free and dissociated, yet, unified with the Brahman in the Kshara, supports but is not affected. This it can do best when it sees that both are aspects of the one Purushottama. The Purushottama, inhabiting all existences as the secret Ishwara, controls the Nature and by his will, now no longer distorted and disfigured by the ego-sense, the Nature works out the actions by the swabhava; the individual soul makes the divinised natural being an instrument of the divine will, *nimittamātram*. He remains even in action *triguṇātīta*, beyond the gunas, free from the gunas, *nistraiguṇya*, he fulfils entirely at last the early injunction of the Gita, *nistraiguṇya bhavārjuna*. He is indeed still the enjoyer of the gunas, as is the Brahman, though not limited by them, *nirguṇam guṇabhoktr ca*, untached, yet all-supporting, even as is that Brahman, *asaktam sarva-vṛt*: but the action of the gunas within him is quite changed; it is lifted above their egoistic character and reactions. For he has unified his whole being in the Purushottama, has assumed the divine being and the higher divine nature of becoming, *mad-bhāva*, has unified even this mind and natural consciousness with the Divine, *manmanā maccittah*. This change is the final evolution of the nature and the consummation of the divine birth, *rahasyam uttamam*. When it is accomplished, the soul is aware of itself as the master of its nature and, grown a light of the divine Light and will of the divine Will, is able to change its natural workings into a divine action."

(*Essays on the Gita*, First Series, pp. 340—343).

ANILBARAN ROY

Sri Aurobindo and the Tantra

What is the place of Tantric philosophy and Tantric sadhana in the philosophy and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is a question which rises in many minds. Sri Aurobindo himself once said in this connection that he was a Vedantin, no doubt, but also a Tantric as much, if not more. Afterwards in the *Arya* he elucidated the philosophical and practical aspects of his Yoga in *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and many other books and articles. Even after the age of the *Arya*, he has dealt with various aspects of the question in many letters written to his disciples.

From all this we gather that both Vedanta and Tantra have met in his Yoga leading towards a supreme goal. That goal is the divine transformation of humanity, the divine life. What Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and Yoga have for their fixed aim, is the complete and perfect and flawless descent of the divine Shakti in man by which man will become of one law of being with the Divine, *sādharmyamāgatā*. In this sadhana and in the philosophical outlook of this sadhana, the contribution of Vedanta and Tantra is considerable ; at the same time his sadhana has gone beyond both of them.

As a representative of the whole world, India has for ages carried on spiritual sadhana and revealed various aspects of the spiritual truth. From a survey of all these systems of philosophy and spiritual disciplines, we can distinguish two chief modes of sadhana which differ also in their philosophical outlook. One is the Vedanta philosophy and the Vedantic sadhana, the other is the Tantra philosophy and the sadhana laid down in Shaiva-Shakta-Vaishnava scriptures. It is necessary for us to have some clear idea of the points of difference as well as of similarity between these two modes of spiritual discipline.

Briefly and simply speaking, Vedanta is the sadhana of the Purusha and Tantra is the sadhana of the Prakriti. But the

aim of both the systems of Yoga is the attainment of the indivisible eternal Sachchidananda. Vedanta has laid stress on the inactive Purusha aspect of Sachchidananda, while Tantra has devoted more attention to the dynamic Prakriti aspect. But Purusha and Prakriti are essentially one. "Shiva and Shakti are one and neither is higher than the other." (*The Garland of Letters*, Chap. XII by late Sir John Woodroffe).

The Vedantic sadhaka accepts the truth of the one indivisible, immutable and immobile Brahman who is Sachchidananda. This Reality is regarded by the Vedanta as One without a second. To arrive at this truth is the aim of all Vedantic sadhana; Brahman in the Nirguna state remains as the still, immobile, eternal, undifferentiated Sachchidananda; in the Saguna state he is the Purusha, Ishwara, the Lord and Ruler of the universe. This Purusha is himself immobile, but with his permission and sanction Prakriti is for ever mobile for his enjoyment.

Ishwara himself is free from any bondage to Prakriti; but Jiva, a portion of Ishwara is bound to Prakriti, and it is his sadhana to be liberated from Prakriti and be united with Ishwara. In some Vedantic paths Prakriti is regarded as wholly false, the illusory creation of an indescribable Maya. However, the chief thing in the different systems of Vedantic sadhana is the attainment of this Purusha, this Ishwara. The path of *jñānayoga* shown by Sri Shankara and other Vedantic Acharyas leads to utter Nirvana through nirvikalpa samadhi in the nirguna undifferentiated immobile Brahman which is the highest status of this Purusha. In this case Jiva loses his being in the infinite Brahman-ocean of Sachchidananda; this is Kaivalya Moksha. In another Vedantic sadhana in the Purusha way, we find Saguna Brahman or God is attained by bhakti or devotion. Through the unswerving devotion of the heart, Jiva attains to *sālokya* (dwelling in the Divine), *sāmīpya* (nearness to the Divine) and *sāyujya* (contact with the Divine). Also through Karmayoga, doing works as a sacrifice and service to the Divine renouncing all desire for fruits of action, one is released from all bondage rising from ignorance and attains either to Saguna Brahman to

be realised by bhakti or to Nirguna Brahman to be realised by jnana. Knowledge, Devotion, Work—these three constitute the triple path of Vedantic sadhana; its aim is to go beyond the dynamic world-play of Prakriti and to attain the one immobile Purusha or be one with him. The one truth of Vedanta philosophy is stability, peace, nivritti,—the everlasting joy of union with the one immobile inactive Purusha.*

On the other hand, Tantra holds that though the ultimate Reality is Sachchidananda, who is *parā samvit*, this Sachchidananda is not merely silent and static, it has at the same time an infinite power and dynamis. To this power Tantra gives the name, Adya Shakti. This Adya Shakti is at the beginning of all the world, of all the movements of Prakriti. This Adya Shakti is the Mother of this universe and its upholder. Sachchidananda or *parā samvit* is Adya Shakti's own self. Parama Shiva who is *parā samvit* is identical with Adya Shakti. "In the supreme state, Shakti exists in her own swarupa form as Being-consciousness-bliss (Sachchidanandamayi, chidrupini) indistinguishable from Shiva" (*Garland of Letters*, Chap. XI). This Adya Shakti is not the Maya of the Vedantic conception. The swarupa of Adya Shakti is above Maya. "Shakti is not to be identified with this form of it (Maya). . . . Maya is a particular and comparatively gross form of Shakti" (*Garland of Letters*, Chap. XI). It is the *parā gati* (supreme movement) of Adya Shakti which by gradual self-contraction has created first Maya, and then Avidyamayi Apra Prakriti. But the supreme movement of Sachchidanandamayi Adya Shakti is different from Maya and Prakriti; it is that which is called Para Prakriti. Adya Shakti Para Prakriti is Sachchidananda's own dynamis. The Upanishad has said, *sa paryyagāt*, "It is he that has gone abroad"; this shows that the Brahman Reality is not mere static, it has also in it an

* In the Vedantic synthesis of the Gita equal stress is laid on the static and the dynamic aspects of the supreme Reality to which the Gita gives the great name, Purushottama; but in the Yoga of the Gita, it is not Prakriti but Purusha who is the Lord of the Yoga, Yogeshwara, and the method of Yoga is the Vedantic triple path of work, knowledge and devotion.

intense dynamic aspect. Hence Tantric philosophy has held up Para Adya Shakti as the goal of all sadhana. In the *parā gati* or Adya Shakti there exists in identification Parama Shiva (who is *parā samvit*) in an immutable, immobile state. That is Sachchidananda. When Para Prakriti is attained, Sachchidananda is attained at the same time. According to Tantra, no separate sadhana is necessary for attaining the entranced immutable Sachchidananda Supreme Purusha who is the Parama Shiva. By attaining Shakti one attains Shiva. For at the status of Sachchidananda there is no difference between stability and movement; hence it is possible to arrive at stability through movement.

The Tantra says that at the status of *parā samvit* or Sachchidananda "Supreme Shiva and Shakti exist in mutual embrace and love". (*Garland of Letters*, Chap. X). "Bliss is supreme love when all thought of love, loving and loved are forgotten in the joy of blissful unity". (*Garland of Letters*, Chap. X). This is the state of Parama Shiva . . . an experience of the Perfect Universe—such universe is Pure Shakti. This state of Para Prakriti is full of extreme and endless bliss. In this state there is not only liberation from Avidya-born suffering and bondage to the world, but here there is a supreme *bhukti*, an undifferentiated infinite bliss rising from the union of Shiva-Shakti, the harmonisation of Parama Shiva with the supreme movement, *parā gati*. This supreme bhoga is the highest aim of Tantra. Thus in the *siddhi* or ultimate realisation of Tantra there is both *mukti* (liberation) and *bhukti* (enjoyment). In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "it includes in its objects of Yoga not only liberation, which is the all-mastering preoccupation of the specific systems, but a cosmic enjoyment of the power of the Spirit, which the others may take incidentally on the way, in part, casually, but avoid making a motive or object. It is a bolder and larger system". (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, Ch. XLIX).

At the highest realisation of Tantric sadhana, Jiva as Shiva unites with Parama Shakti, or as Shakti unites with Parama

Shiva, and becomes merged in an undifferentiated inexhaustible supreme bliss. In the attainment of this state also, Tantra has followed the path of Prakriti. Tantra says, "Without the knowledge of Shakti there is no mukti". *Śaktijñānam vinā devi muktirhāsyāya kalpate*. As the Vedānta in the path of the Puruṣha follows the triple sadhana of knowledge, devotion and work, so Tantra for attaining Shakti has resorted to the knowledge of Shakti, the worship of Shakti and the *kriyāyoga* of Shakti. Knowledge is predominant in the Dakṣiṇa Marga (the right-hand path) of Tantra, while in the Vama Marga (the left-hand path) bhoga or enjoyment is predominant; but the aim of both these paths is the attainment of Prakriti, the worship of Shakti. Adya Shakti as Para Prakriti has not only created all Jivas but has entered into each of them as its own prakriti. As the prakriti of the Jiva she is absorbed in sleep in the inconscience of Avidya; it is for this that the Jiva has to go through birth and death and various other sufferings. But when this Adya Shakti absorbed in sleep as prakriti will be aroused, she will attain in each Jiva her Sachchidananda swarupa situated above. At the status of the Para Prakriti she is eternally sachchidanandamayi; in the prakriti of the Jiva she has to be awakened from the sleep of Avidya—this is the sadhana of the Tantra. The Shakti sleeping involved in Jiva prakriti is called Kundalini Shakti; the lowest centre in the human body, the Muladhara, is the place of this Shakti. It is this which has to be awakened by sadhana and turned upward. It is the view of Tantric philosophy that the sadhana of Puruṣha is difficult and arduous, but the movement of Prakriti is swift; if somehow this Kundalini Shakti residing in the human body can be awakened, Shakti turns and goes upward by very swift means, and as a result the Jiva carried by the upward stream of his own spiritual shakti easily arrives at union with Sachchidananda. Once Kundalini is awakened, it unites the Jiva consciousness with the para Adya Shakti by an irresistible movement; as a result, the force of the Adya Shakti lying involved in prakriti returns to its source and attains fulfilment. All the cosmic

principles can be found in the human body—the different tattwas have their places in the different parts of the body. All such parts of our being as life, mind, chitta, intelligence, ego have their own centres in some parts of our body. Tantra has ascertained seven such important centres or chakras. These chakras are situated as nervous centres in the spinal cord of man. Here is Sri Aurobindo's description of these chakras:

"The Muladhara governs the physical down to the sub-conscious; the abdominal centre—*svādhiṣṭhāna*—governs the lower vital; the naval centre—*nabhipadma* or *manipura*—governs the larger vital; the heart centre—*hridpadma* or *anahata*—governs the emotional being; the throat centre—*viśuddha*—governs the expressive and externalising mind; the centre between the eye-brows—*ājñācakra*—governs the dynamic mind, will, vision, mental formation; the thousand-petalled lotus—*sahasradala*—above commands the higher thinking mind, houses the still higher illumined mind and at the highest opens to the intuition through which or else by an overflowing directness the overmind can have with the rest communication or an immediate contact." (*Lights on Yoga*).

"All the centres", says Sri Aurobindo, "are in the middle of the body, not on left or right; they are supposed to be attached to the spinal cord, but, in fact, all these things are in the *sukṣma deha*; though one has the feeling of their activities as if in the physical body when the consciousness is awake".

In Tantra Shastra these chakras have special significances in sadhana. In Tantric Yoga one has experience of Jiva Shakti in the Muladhara, of the personal manifestation of Adya Shakti as *iṣṭa devī* in the heart or the psychic centre, and of Shiva-Shakti in the sahasradala and above it. The Kundalini Jiva Shakti has to be lifted up by sadhana from the Muladhara and united with the *iṣṭa devī* at the heart centre; then by a process—technically known as shatchakrabhedha, or piercing of the six centres, it has to be made one with the Mahashakti residing in the seventh centre, sahasradala, and then it has to be merged in an undifferentiated bliss of union with Shiva. Once Kundalini

is aroused, she by herself rushes towards Parama Shiva, and at that time sadhana becomes easy. Hence Tantric sadhakas do the sadhana of Prakriti or Kundalini. Vaishnav Sahajiya sadhakas also follow this method and take up Prakriti (whom they regard as Radha) to Sri Krishna in the sahasrara and become merged in eternal *rāsālīlā* with him. In their own way all Shakta and Vaishnav Sahajia sadhakas have attained siddhi through this Kundalini Yoga. Sadhakas of the Kundalini are known as Kaulas. The lives of Shakta Kaulas like Srimat Purnananda, Brahmananda Giri, Ramprasad, Bama Kshepa and Vaishnav Kaulas like Chandidas, Ramananda Ray are well known in Bengal.

In Vedantic sadhana one is satisfied if he alone is liberated. Tantric sadhana is not exactly of single individuals; it has a sadhan chakra or a circle of sadhakas. Several sadhakas and sadhikas, men and women, form a chakra or a centre of sadhana in a secret place away from locality; in that chakra by the combined sadhana of all they awaken the Kundalini Shakti in every one and arrive at siddhi or samadhi. There were many such chakras or sadhana centres in India in former times; they exist even now. These chakras are known as Tattva chakra, Sree chakra and Bhavani chakra. In various forms these centres of Prakriti sadhana still exist in India. In this way Tantric sadhana by turning Prakriti upward through the practice of occult methods has brought the realisation of bhukti and mukti to many small groups of sadhakas and sadhikas.

Now we can get some clear light in the discussion of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga philosophy. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is a complete synthesis of Vedanta and Tantra. In his Yoga a combination of both the sadhanas of Purusha and Prakriti has envisaged as its aim not merely mukti, not merely even mukti and bhukti, but a third objective. We have already said that his aim is the full descent of the divine Shakti in the Jiva. The result of this is not merely the liberation of an individual, not merely even the mukti and bhukti of a group of sadhakas and sadhikas; the result envisaged in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is

the appearance of a new race free from disease, decay and death as a consummation of the terrestrial evolution,—the visible descent of the Divine Purusha and the Divine Shakti for accomplishing an unprecedented Yugantara or New Age on the earth. This will be possible by the integral transformation of the adhara of the Jiva. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is not merely for mukti or bhukti, it is engaged in bringing about an integral transformation and transmutation of human nature. Sri Aurobindo says in *The Life Divine*: "If it be true that spirit is involved in matter and apparent Nature is secret God, then the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realisation of God within and without are the highest and most legitimate aim possible to man upon earth."

With this object in view Sri Aurobindo has made a synthesis of the Yoga of Purusha and the Yoga of Prakriti into a higher integral Yoga. In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga Ishwara and Shakti, Purusha and Prakriti have the same indispensability and the same place. Sri Aurobindo has called the supreme Reality Sachchidananda, and in this view of the ultimate truth he is in full agreement with Vedanta as well as Tantra. But he does not, like some Vedantins, regard the impersonal aspect of the one undifferentiated and immutable Sachchidananda as the highest Truth. He regards the one supreme Purusha or the Purushottama as the supreme Truth; Para Shakti is one and identical with Purushottama. It is the Will of Purushottama which is Adya Shakti. In his static aspect he is Purushottama. In his dynamic aspect he is Adya Shakti. It is Purushottama who in Tantra also is called the Parama Shiva. Shiva-Shakti tattwa of Tantra and Purushottama-Parameshwari tattwa of Sri Aurobindo are virtually the same, only there is a little difference in the conception. Parama Shiva of Tantra is for ever absorbed in samadhi, he has no will of manifestation; it is Adya Shakti who is the cause of manifestation and withdrawal from manifestation, of sristi and laya. But the Purushottama of Sri Aurobindo is not merely Shiva absorbed in the samadhi of Sachchidananda, he has a cosmic will, the will of manifestation;

he has an alert eye on all the play of Adya Shakti. Sri Aurobindo does not accept the corpse-like Shiva of the Tantrics who lies under the feet of Shakti ; his Shiva is the ever-awake Godhead of the dual Shiva-Durga of Tantra ; the Divine Mother is the embodied will of that Purushottama. Sri Aurobindo has revealed wonderfully the mystery of Shakti in his book, *The Mother*. What he has written there about the different aspects of Shakti agrees with what we find in Tantra Shastra. Like Tantra Sri Aurobindo also calls the Para Shakti, the Divine Mother.

“There are three ways of being of the Mother of which you can become aware when you enter into touch of oneness with the Conscious Force that upholds us and the universe. Transcendent, the original supreme Shakti, she stands above the worlds and links the creation to the ever unmanifest mystery of the Supreme. Universal, the cosmic Mahashakti, she creates all these beings and contains and enters, supports and conducts all these million processes and forces. Individual, she embodies the power of these two vaster ways of her existence, makes them living and near to us and mediates between the human personality and the divine Nature.” (*The Mother*).

Sri Aurobindo's Transcendent, Universal and Individual aspects are indicated in the Tantra by the words Parā Sambit, Nada and Bindu respectively. Tantra says,

Saccidānanda-vibhavāt sakalāt parameśvarāt

Āsīt śakti-stato nādaḥ nādāt bindu-samudbhavaḥ

Shārāda-Tilak—chap. I, verse 7.

“Shakti issued from Parameshwara vested with the wealth of Sat, Chit, Ananda, from Shakti came Nada, from Nada came Bindu”. The symbolic figure of Nada signifies universality, and Bindu or point indicates consciousness in a concentrated massed form and this is the individual being. In Tantric Mantras and Yantras these three states are thus symbolically indicated.

Sri Aurobindo thus describes the gradual manifesting process of Para Shakti:

(1) *Transcendent.*

The one original transcendent Shakti, the Mother stands above all the worlds and bears in her eternal consciousness the Supreme Divine. . . . The Supreme is manifest in her forever as the everlasting Sachchidananda, manifested through her in the worlds as the one and dual consciousness of Ishwara-Shakti. . . .

(2) *Universal.*

The Mahashakti, the universal Mother, works out whatever is transmitted by her transcendent consciousness from the Supreme and enters into the worlds that she has made. . . .

There are many planes of her creation, many steps of the Divine Shakti. At the summit of this manifestation of which we are a part there are worlds of infinite existence, consciousness, force and bliss over which the Mother stands as the unveiled eternal Power. . . .

Nearer to us are the worlds of a perfect supramental creation in which the Mother is the supramental Mahashakti, a Power of divine omniscient Will and omnipotent Knowledge. . . . There all movements are the steps of the Truth; there all beings are souls and powers and bodies of the Divine Light. . . .

But here where we dwell are the worlds of the Ignorance, worlds of mind and life and body separated in consciousness from their source, of which this earth is a significant centre and its evolution a crucial process. This too with all its obscurity and struggle and imperfection is upheld by the Universal Mother; this too is impelled and guided to its secret aim by the Mahashakti.

(3) *Personal.*

Personally too she has stooped to descend here into the Darkness that she may lead it to the Light, into the Falsehood and Error that she may convert it to the Truth, into this Death that she may turn it to godlike Life, into this world-pain . . . that she may end it in the transforming ecstasy of her sublime Ananda.

Four great Aspects of the Mother, four of her leading Powers and Personalities have stood in front in her guidance of this Universe Wisdom, Strength, Harmony, Perfection are their several attributes. To the four we give the four great names, Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati.

—*The Mother.*

Sri Aurobindo has thus vividly set forth the Transcendent, Universal and Individual aspects of Sachchidanandamayi Parama Adya Shakti. Here we find expressed in simple language his profound divine knowledge about creation and the object of creation. Analysing the truth of creation, Sri Aurobindo has divided the whole of existence into seven principles—Sat, Chit, Ananda, Supermind, Mind, Life, Body. This corresponds to the seven lokas of the Veda, and also to the seven worlds of the Tantra: these are—Satya, Tapah, Jana, Mahah, Svah, Bhuvah, Bhuh.

Sri Aurobindo says that Adya Shakti has created supermind from sat, chit, ananda ; these constitute the Truth creation ; after that through the influence of Maya the mental world, the vital world and the material world have been created with gradually increasing envelopment of Avidya. In Tantra also we find through symbolism some hints of this truth. Here it is necessary to give a brief analysis of the Tantric account of creation:—"From Parameshwara vested with the wealth of Sat, Chit and Ananda issued Shakti ; from Shakti, Nada and Bindu". (*Garland of Letters*, Chap. XII). "In the supreme state, Shakti is sachchidanandamayi and indistinguishable from Parashiva". (*Garland of Letters*, Chap. XI).

"Shakti evolves Nada and Bindu. These are aspects of Shakti preparing to create Universe—These two are stages in the movement towards the manifestation of the self as the Universe. In these the mere readiness and potency of Shakti to act develops into action . . . Nada is action. In simple language, potency and readiness to create becomes for the first time active as Nada and then more so as Bindu (Chap. XIII).

Nada, into which Para Shakti evolves is the seed or essence. . . . It develops into Bindu. Nada is the first emanative stage, the second is Bindu. Bindu is said to be the massive state of Shakti, *ghanāvasthā*. Shakti is seized with the desire to create and becomes *ghanībhūta* (Chap. XIII).

In Sadashiva tattva there is the commencement of the first subjective formation of Ideas. It is the first step in evolution and the last in involution. The Mantra Shastra calls this "Nada". This is the source from where Avatars come. Ishwar tattva is called Bindu in Mantra Shastra, which is the externalisation of Nada; consciousness here identifies itself with the Universe . . . and thus subjectifies it and becomes with it a Point of consciousness (Bindu) (Chap. X).

Shakti evolves for herself the objective world in order that it may be the content of the Shiva consciousness. She is the Pure Will ever associated with Shiva. . . . She is called the Heart . . . the Heart of the supreme Lord and the Heart of the Universe, the pulsating movements of which are Herself as Shakti (Chap. XI).

The Supreme Shiva desiring to make manifest the Universe which is one with Himself first of all shines forth as Chit Shakti . . . which is detached from Maya. She first appears as infinite number of *tattvas*, worlds and beings which are in the nature of a blooming forth of consciousness and bliss. (Chap. XI).

Maya is a particular and gross form of Shakti which appears after the evolution of Nada, Bindu and Vidya tattvas. (Chap. X). Maya is the limiting force—contracting the natural perfections of the Self". (Quotations from "The Garland of Letters").

Sri Aurobindo regards the account of Tantra given by Sir John Woodroffe as authoritative. From that we come to know that there is a Truth creation separate from and situated above the Maya which is the creatrix of the Nescience of body, life and mind. That Truth creation is not merely something undifferentiated and featureless; there exist universal as well as

individual being based on Sachchidananda. There the One and the Many exist in the fullest harmony. The creation which Sri Aurobindo calls supramental, Rit+Chit, is referred to in the Tantra as Nada+Bindu or Sada Shiva+Ishwara. Tantra has given hints of this spiritual dynamis or this Truth creation of Adya Shakti; but Sri Aurobindo has revealed that dynamis as the supramental principle which is at the core of the Universe and all spiritual manifestation.

In one word Sri Aurobindo's Yoga can be called Supramental. This supramental Yoga is the integral Yoga, because it is in the supramental level that a real creation of the world has been possible. Tantra has given symbolical indications of this level and has also given the hint of awakening the Kundalini latent in Prakriti and taking it up to that level. But Sri Aurobindo's Yoga has gone one step further, as a result of which the form of the whole Universe may be changed. Sri Aurobindo does not simply want to reach the supermind, he wants to transform this world of Jivas by the power of the supermind. The integral transformation of all Prakriti is supermind's own dharma. It is true that we find the conception of this *loka* in Tantra, but a complete ascent into it has not been possible even in the Tantric age; otherwise a great effort would also have been made for its descent. Sri Aurobindo with great Yogic power has risen to the supramental consciousness and power and has made it descend downwards—this is something new and unique in the world's history of Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo has said: "We have to regard this all-containing, all-originating, all-consummating Supermind as the nature of the Divine Being, . . . in its action as the Lord and Creator of its own worlds. This is the truth of that which we call God". Purushottama himself as the Lord of this supramental *loka* has created this world and is sustaining it by this his *parā prakriti, yayedam dhāryate jagat*. So this supermind is not a mere being, it is full of dynamis. "Supermind is the vast self-extension of the Brahman that contains and develops. . . . It possesses the power of development, of evolution".

Development or extension is the work of Shakti. Tantra says, that which extends (*tanita*), that which saves is the sadhana of Tantra, the sadhana of Shakti. Sri Aurobindo's Supermind is the highest extension of Shakti, so the place of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is on the highest peak of Tantric sadhana. Indeed the supramental truth and force of Sri Aurobindo has given Tantra a new birth in a supreme divine world. Unless Prakriti is completely transformed by the supramental power, the sadhana of Prakriti, the sadhana of Shakti remain unfulfilled. The power of the Adya Shakti that has created the world can accomplish impossible miracles. It is not at all believable that when the manifestation of this Shakti will reach its perfection, this world will still remain full of all kinds of suffering and death and falsehood. A complete transformation of the world is indeed the object of creation ; the advent of immortality in this world of death, the appearance of a supramental race free from disease, decay and death—this will be the infallible creation of the supramental power.

Tantra has not been able to ascertain any special aim of Parama Shiva or Purushottama in creating this Avidya-born world of mind, life and body. Tantric sadhana is for swift upward movement ; it takes up the movement of Prakriti and by sadhana leads it towards the world of spiritual power, towards the source of the Shakti lying latent in Prakriti, in a direction opposite to the rhythm of creation towards quiescence. In that region there is manifestation, there is Shakti, there is creation, but that is not the world of Prakriti, that is the world of Vidya, that is Kailasa of massed concentrated consciousness. Sri Aurobindo has seen a special object of Purushottama even in this world created by Avidya in the Prakriti, and that object is the transformation of this very Avidya by the Vidya Shakti. So we can say that the Yoga of Tantra is the Yoga of dissolution through Shakti, and that the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is the Yoga of creation through Shakti. It is not that there is no hint in the Tantra about an immortal world, about creation after dissolution ; but that has remained undeveloped. It is that which

has been fully developed in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. The Tantra says,

Prakāśamānām prathame prayāṇe pratiprayāṇe
pyamṛtāyamānām
Antaḥpadavyām-anusancarantīm-ānandarūpām-avalām
prapadye
Shyama-rahasya, verse 16.

"I take my refuge in that blissful Kulakundalini who, moving inward, manifests herself when going from the Muladhara to the sahasrara, and while returning from there becomes apt for immortality".

The Tantra here speaks also of making the material body full of amrita (the nectar of immortality) by Prakriti after she has fully enjoyed the ecstatic bliss of Shiva-Shakti union; but the stress of Tantra is towards remaining absorbed in the sahasrara. In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga also there is the place of the upward as well as the downward movement of Prakriti; the ascent is the indispensable beginning, but the ultimate aim is the descent and the transformation of Prakriti. In Tantric sadhana when Jiva Kundalini piercing the six centres becomes united with Parama Shiva-Shakti, the human body is freed from the ravages of disease and the wrinkles of old age, man becomes long-lived and jivanmukta and at the end attains to Kailasa or the world of Ananda. But in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, by the descent of the higher Shakti the human body becomes completely free from disease, decay and death and a new age of divine life and divine work is initiated on this mortal earth. Thus Sri Aurobindo's Yoga agrees particularly with Vaidic Yoga, the path of the Veda being the path of divine creation and divine work. This path was lost by Vedantic sadhana. Tantra tried to recover to some extent the secret of the Veda through another symbolism and Mantra sadhana; but in Sri Aurobindo the Truth creation of the Veda synthetised with the Tantric Mahashakti has brought forth a supreme divine supramental Yoga. In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga there is the synthesis of the Vaidic sadhana of the Purusha and the Tantric sadhana of the Prakriti.

In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, the sadhana does not begin with the Kundalini Shakti ; it begins with the upward aspiration of the psychic being or the chaitya Purusha seated in the inner heart ; we can call this aspiration the Vaidic Agni. Sri Aurobindo does not awaken the electric power of Kundalini at the very beginning. First, one has to awaken the psychic aspiration, the upward will towards the Divine and to offer his ego and his whole *ādhāra* with everything belonging to it to the Divine. So Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is also called Atmasamarpana Yoga. This is conscious surrender ; here the awakened Purusha is surrendering everything and as a result the divine Shakti descending from within and above becomes extended in the whole being of the Jiva. This is also Tantric sadhana, but its way is a little different. In this path, Shakti has to be invoked downward or outward from within—the Purusha becomes awakened, separates himself completely from the lower Prakriti, surrenders his all to the inner and higher Divine Shakti. When the Divine Shakti appears, by that very touch the lower Kundalini Shakti arises ; there is no necessity of doing any separate prescribed sadhana for that.

Sri Aurobindo himself thus distinguishes his Yoga from the Tantric and other Yogas: "In the method of synthesis which we have been following, another clue of principle has been pursued which is derived from another view of the possibilities of Yoga. This starts from the method of Vedanta to arrive at the aim of the Tantra. In the Tantric method Shakti is all-important, becomes the key to the finding of spirit ; in this synthesis spirit, soul is all-important, becomes the secret of taking up of Shakti. The Tantric method starts from the bottom and grades the ladder of ascent upwards to the summit ; therefore its initial stress is upon the action of the awakened Shakti in the nervous system of the body and its centres ; the opening of the six lotuses is the opening of the ranges of the power of Spirit. Our synthesis takes man as a spirit in mind much more than a spirit in body and assumes in him the capacity to begin on that level, to spiritualise his being by the power of the soul

in mind opening itself directly to a higher spiritual force and being and to perfect by that higher force so possessed and brought into action the whole of his nature. For that reason our initial stress has fallen upon the utilisation of powers of soul in mind and the turning of the triple key of knowledge, works and love in the locks of the spirit ; the Hathayogic methods can be dispensed with,—though there can be no objection to their partial use,—the Rajayoga will only enter in as an informal element. To arrive by the shortest way at the largest development of spiritual power and being and divinise by it a liberated nature in the whole range of human living is our inspiring motive.” (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, Chapter XLIX).

About the ultimate transformation of the human body Sri Aurobindo says: “The object of supramentalisation is a body fitted to embody and express the supramental consciousness on earth so long as one remains in the physical life. It is a step in the spiritual evolution on the earth and not a step in the passage towards a supraphysical world . . . the nature of the step is different from that aimed at by other Yogas”. (Quoted from a letter).

For such supramental transformation of the individual man and of the human race Sri Aurobindo has applied all his divine Yoga Shakti. So in the highest manifestation of Shakti he is the supreme and the greatest Kaula ; in the language of the Tantra he is the lord of the mighty empire of Shakti. On his birth anniversary to-day, we all bow down at the feet of Sri Aurobindo, the Parama Shiva, the Purushottama.

BIRENDRAKISHORE ROY CHOWDHURY

Sri Aurobindo and Bergson

I am extremely grateful to the organizers of the Birthday Book for the opportunity they have given me of paying my humble tribute to Sri Aurobindo on the happy occasion of his seventieth birthday. If I am asked, Who is the most creative thinker of the present day in the East?, I will unhesitatingly answer: Sri Aurobindo. If I am similarly asked, Who is the most dynamic thinker of the present day in the West, I will equally unhesitatingly answer: Bergson. A comparison between Sri Aurobindo and Bergson, therefore, is a very interesting study, as it will reveal the fundamental resemblances as well as differences between two thinkers of the greatest creative power of the present day, one in the East and another in the West, the more so, as these resemblances and differences are, to a great extent, as I shall presently show, typical of the resemblances and differences between Eastern and Western thought. I have, therefore, chosen this as the subject of the present paper which I intend to send as my humble contribution to this Birthday Book.

Sri Aurobindo decidedly belongs to the East, to our Aryabhumi. Every page of his great work *The Life Divine* reveals this. This does not mean, however, that he is only an interpreter of our ancient thought. He is a seer with the same prophetic vision and the same explosive power of truth as the great sages of our land in the past, such as Manu or Yajnavalkya or Vyasa. His place is by the side of these great seers (*mantra-draṣṭārah*). And just as about Manu and Yajnavalkya and Vyasa, there cannot be the least doubt that it is only our Aryabhumi which could have produced them, so also about Sri Aurobindo nobody can have the least doubt that it is only the soil of India which could have produced him.

Not that Sri Aurobindo has had no contact with Western thought and culture. Those who know anything of his life

are aware how steeped he was in the most formative period of his life in all that was best in Western civilization and culture, both ancient and modern. He is of all Indian—and not only Indian—thinkers the one for whom the ancient Greek philosophers are still living personalities and not merely subjects for historical research. Heraclitus, one of the most difficult thinkers of ancient Greece, has sprung into life in the little book which he has dedicated to the study of him. But if his contact with Greek philosophy is so real, no less real is his contact with modern Western thought. He is not in the habit of mentioning names, but as one reads his books, one cannot fail to notice how thorough is his grasp of the great Western philosophers of the present age, such as Kant, Hegel, Spencer and Bergson. He is also very well acquainted with the latest developments of scientific thought in the West.

When I say, therefore, that Sri Aurobindo belongs to our Aryabhumi, the last thing which I have in mind is to underrate the influence of Western thought upon him. That influence is there, very clearly visible, but Sri Aurobindo, a great creative genius as he is, has not allowed himself to be dominated by it. He has made full use of Western thought, but he has made use of it for the purpose of building up his own system which he has reared upon the solid foundations of our own culture with which he has a very direct and intimate contact through original sources.

Bergson is not so decidedly and pronouncedly a Western thinker as Sri Aurobindo is a thinker of the East. Yet the structure of his thought is Western, and even where he deviates from the traditional lines of Western thought, such deviations bear a Western rather than an Eastern stamp. Even his mysticism, even his faith in intuition and his abhorrence of purely intellectual constructions have a distinctly Western touch about them. They are indeed a natural reaction against the excesses of certain schools of thought which prevailed in Europe for several centuries. They are very different from the mysticism of an Eastern mystic. Even his intuition is very different from

intuition as understood by Eastern thinkers. There is hardly any trace of Eastern influence upon Bergson's thought, though he differs in important respects fundamentally from the main trends of European thought of the present day.

But my object in this paper is not to show either how truly Indian Sri Aurobindo's thought is or how truly Western Bergson's philosophy is. My object is to make a comparative study of these two great creative thinkers of the present day, and I propose to do this under the following heads: (1) conception of intuition, (2) doctrine of reality, and (3) theory of evolution and the conception of the destiny of man.

CONCEPTION OF INTUITION

Of all modern philosophers of the West, Bergson has emphasized most strongly the standpoint of intuition. By intuition he means a direct approach to reality, as opposed to the round-about way of approaching it with the help of the intellect. He has defined intuition in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* as "a kind of intellectual sympathy by which we can enter into the heart of a thing and thereby coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible". This makes it quite clear that by intuition he means something which gives us direct access to the heart of a thing. This definition is to be understood by reference to the other and more usual kind of approach, the approach through the intellect or reason. So the contrast is between moving round an object, which is all that the intellect can do, and entering into the heart of it, which is the prerogative of intuition.

So far so good. But when we ask, What is that which has the power of entering into the heart of a thing?, then Bergson fails to give us a clear answer. It seems that he wants to take it for granted that we have a faculty called intuition which enables us to grasp reality in its inmost essence. But even if we assume that there is such a faculty, this does not remove our fundamental difficulties. For what we want to know above everything else is: What is the nature of this intuition? It is

no consolation to us to be told repeatedly that it is an “intellectual sympathy”, an “intellectual auscultation”, for we want to know precisely how such an intellectual sympathy, such an intellectual auscultation is possible.

It is rather strange that Bergson who himself did not believe in the power of the intellect to give access to the heart of reality, should have spoken of an intellectual sympathy or an intellectual auscultation as the means of getting to the essence of reality. The stress is evidently upon the words, ‘sympathy’ and ‘auscultation’ rather than upon the word ‘intellect’. What Bergson means is that if we can have such an intimate sympathy as will make us feel ourselves one with the object we contemplate, then we can get to know it as it really is. This sort of intimate sympathy which Bergson is here contemplating is very similar to what in Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras is called *samāpatti*,¹ by which it is claimed it is possible to make oneself one with anything big or small. But *samāpatti* is not considered in the Yoga Sutras competent to give full and perfect knowledge. It is only a stage—and that, too, not the highest stage—in *samprajñāta-samādhi* or cognitive trance. It has got to be superseded before the highest form of cognitive trance, *ṛtambharā prajñā*, can emerge, when the knowledge of objects in their separateness is replaced by a cosmic consciousness where the individuality of objects disappears and a total consciousness emerges which reveals all objects all at once. But even this is not regarded as the highest condition by the Yoga Sutras, for above it there is the *nirbīja-asamprajñāta-samādhi*, the seedless non-cognitive trance.

But apart from what Patanjali teaches us on the subject, is it not quite evident that a particular knowledge of any object

¹ See Yoga Sutras, I, 41, and the concluding portion of Vyāsa’s commentary on it, where he says :

“तदेवमभिजातमार्णकमस्य चेतसो ग्रहीतुमर्हणग्राह्येषु पुरुषेन्द्रियभूतेषु या तत्स्यतदजनता तेषु स्थितस्य तदाकारपत्तिः सा समापत्तिरित्युच्यते ।”

‘This, then, is *samāpatti*, the mind showing itself like a transparent crystal, in the form of the object it comes in contact with, be it the knower, the knowable, or the act of knowledge’.

falls far short of what may be called complete and perfect knowledge? It cannot even give adequate knowledge of the particular object with which it is concerned. Supposing it is possible for me to become one with a horse, shall I be able to know all that there is to be known about a horse? Does a horse know fully what a horse truly is? Does even a man know truly what he is? A knowledge of a thing, therefore, in its particularity does not even give us an adequate knowledge of that thing. Still less does it give us any knowledge of the totality of objects. Such knowledge, therefore, as we obtain by intellectual sympathy, even if it is sympathy of the most intimate form, gives us no knowledge which is metaphysically of any importance. It may at best give us some knowledge which is of help to us in the narrow pursuits of our worldly life, but it is certainly not competent to give us any knowledge which can satisfy the philosopher.

It is no wonder, therefore, that Bergson passes from this hopelessly inadequate conception of intuition, with which he starts in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, to one which is infinitely higher. The last sentence with which he concludes this book is: "Metaphysics can therefore be defined as integral experience". If, therefore, intuition is the sole reliance of metaphysics, it follows that intuition must be integral experience. Here Bergson by one jump passes from an extremely narrow conception of intuition to one which is perfectly adequate. When we ask, however, How is this transition effected?, How can intuition which was originally the knowledge of particular things in their particularity, come to acquire this new significance of an all-comprehensive knowledge which breaks the bounds of individual objects and sees them all together as one harmonious, homogeneous whole?, we get no satisfactory answer from Bergson. Nor do we get any from him in his later works. In *Time and Free-Will* and *Creative Evolution*, for example, we are told that the knowledge of reality, as revealed by intuition, is that of a pure flow, of a spontaneous movement, to which Bergson has given the name Time. But this is as far from

integral experience as anything possibly can be. In pure flow there is no integration at all; there is no cohesion at all between what goes before and what comes after. Bergson very proudly points out that in his philosophy the past never dies. But we may point out that the present also never lives in his philosophy, for life implies some stability and some cohesion.

Integral experience, therefore, is a completely detached and isolated island in Bergson's philosophy. And yet it is a very vital part of his philosophy. It is vital, not in the sense that it is an essential link in a systematic whole, but it is vital in a very different sense. In fact, as I have pointed out elsewhere, much of the real philosophy of Bergson lies in the unsystematic part of it. It is vital, as showing the direction in which Bergson's mind moves. Bergson really felt the need of a cosmic intuition which could integrate the whole of experience into a harmonious whole. But he could not show how it was connected with the view of intuition previously formulated by him.

The connection was through the psychology of Bergson's mind rather than through any logical categories. This psychology worked in the following manner: He was dissatisfied with the intellect for two main reasons: firstly, because it gives too general a picture and does not pay sufficient attention to the individual details, and secondly, because it is analytical, that is to say, it dissects every experience into an infinite number of different elements and then joins them together to form a sort of patched-up whole. This patched-up whole of the intellect is very different from the genuine whole of experience. Bergson, therefore, in the first part of his *Introduction to Metaphysics* drew our attention to the imperative need of knowing things in all their individual details and not merely in a general way. But he equally felt the need of a method by which it was possible to preserve the genuine whole of experience, instead of splitting it up into an infinity of parts loosely joined together by a general concept. And that is why in the latter part of the same work he defined intuition as integral experience.

All the logical difficulties of Bergson's philosophy have their origin in this oscillation between these two views of intuition—the view of it as a knowledge of each particular thing in all its particularity, and secondly, as a knowledge of reality as a truly integrated whole. Naturally the gap between these two views is too wide to be bridged by any logic. Bergson attempted to bridge it with the help of the same intellect which he had so much despised. He was desperately in need of something which could impart some stability, some universality to the intuitions, and he could think of nothing else which could serve his purpose than the intellect. It was really a case of the drowning man catching at a straw. How this attempt to impart some fixity, some stability to intuitions with the help of the intellect was a disastrous failure I have shown very clearly elsewhere.¹

Bergson's swan song *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* gives another solution of the same problem. It is to cement the two views with the help of the mystic's experience. True intuition, Bergson now declares, is the mystic's experience. Such a solution, I may here note in passing, could only have suggested itself to a Bergson. He does not care if for the sake of truth he has to throw logic to the winds. In his previous attempts at a solution he made some show of logic. Now he takes complete leave of all logic. This shows clearly what Bergson really is—a mystic. I think on the whole it was better that Bergson did take this bold step of taking the whole problem out of the hands of logic rather than follow the traditional way of sticking to conventional methods when such methods had proved hopelessly inadequate.

Whatever that might be, it is undoubtedly a bold step—and I may add, a characteristically Bergsonian step—when Bergson, instead of giving fresh arguments to link together the two views of intuition, gives us the prescription: "Go to a mystic if you want to know what intuition is". But unfortunately, this prescription does not help us much, for there are

¹ See my third article on *The Philosophy of Henri Bergson* ("Review of Philosophy and Religion", January, 1942).

mystics and mystics. There are so many types of mysticism and so many grades within the same type, that the identification of intuition with the mystic's experience does not really tell us anything. Bergson himself feels it, and therefore he makes a fairly elaborate attempt to show that all mystics have practically the same experience. In spite of this, however, he himself groups mystics under two broad classes: contemplative and active. I have dealt with the defects of this classification elsewhere, and I do not want to say anything here, beyond pointing out that these two groups, contemplative and active, do overlap and must overlap. A contemplative mystic, if his contemplation is of sufficient intensity and depth, cannot fail to be active. And an active mystic, with a living faith in his mission of love or of service, must himself have a grasp of truth through contemplation. If he does not possess the truth himself, how can he hand it over to others? This classification also introduces a fundamental change in Bergson's earlier conception of intuition. If intuition is concerned only with knowledge, how can it become active, that is, practical? Moreover, how can this active type of intuition be looked upon as higher than the contemplative type, where the pure disinterested pursuit of truth is alone present? But I do not want to press this point further, as I have already dealt with it elsewhere.

This brief exposition of Bergson's views on intuition has brought into clear relief two things. The first is that Bergson approaches intuition from a negative, rather than from a positive point of view. For him the vital matter is that it should be something different from, and even opposed to, the intellect. He is therefore rather careless about what its positive character is to be. This is the root cause of the many oscillations which we find in his views on intuition. All these different views express different characteristics which are found wanting in the intellect. Secondly, and as a result of this negative attitude, Bergson does not pay attention to the different grades of intuition. That intuition can differ very much in degree, that there are all shades and grades of it, beginning from the lowest,

which is little more than an extremely temporary flash of truth, limited very much in extent and duration as well as intensity, and ending in a steady and intense light revealing the fullness of truth, never occurs to him.

Here we see a fundamental difference between Sri Aurobindo's conception of intuition and that of Bergson. This difference is partly a difference between the Eastern and the Western view of intuition. The Eastern philosopher, much more than the Western, is familiar with the vast range of intuitions and the wide gulf that separates one intuition from another. Be that as it may, Sri Aurobindo sees vast differences between one intuition and another. I must make my meaning clear. I am not thinking merely of that to which Sri Aurobindo has given the specific designation intuition, but I am thinking of the whole range of higher consciousness which he has described so thoroughly under the different titles, Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind and Supermind. All these higher levels of consciousness are intuitive, in the sense in which we understand the term 'intuition', that is, in the sense of a non-sensuous, direct experience. In the account which I give below of Sri Aurobindo's conception of intuition, this fact should be clearly borne in mind.

For Sri Aurobindo the value of intuition depends upon the source from which it emanates and upon the presence or absence of mental stuff that is found mixed with it. A non-sensuous experience, *qua* non-sensuous, has no value. Such an experience, far from being a communication from a higher region, may even be one from a lower plane, and Sri Aurobindo warns us particularly against such spurious intuitions. (*Vide The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 998).

Bergson has huddled together all higher forms of consciousness under the single term 'intuition'. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, has distinguished five levels of consciousness above the mental, namely, the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind and Supermind. Each of these is in a position to give us intuitions, but the values of these intuitions

differ very considerably from one another. Those that emanate from the first three of these are full of mental stuff, and therefore, their value cannot be regarded as very great. Even those that emanate from the Overmind have got certain limitations; for example, they may enable us to comprehend the whole universe under one aspect but fail to give us any knowledge of it under any other aspect.

There is, however, another aspect of the matter. Intuitive experience not only comes from above, but also from within. This is another feature of Sri Aurobindo's conception of intuition which distinguishes it from that of Bergson. Our psychic being (*chaitya purusha*) is the representative within us of the Divine Principle and constantly sends light which penetrates our surface consciousness. It is thus another source of intuitive experience. But the value of this intuitive experience depends upon the stage of development of the psychic being, which itself depends upon what light it has received from the higher sources.

As regards the relative status of intuition and reason, Sri Aurobindo undoubtedly gives intuition a higher place than reason. For example, he says: "A consciousness that proceeds by sight, the consciousness of the seer, is a greater power for knowledge than the consciousness of the thinker. The perceptual power of the inner sight is greater and more direct than the perceptual power of thought: it is a spiritual sense that seizes something of the substance of Truth and not only her figure; but it outlines the figure also and at the same time catches the significance of the figure, and it can embody her with a fairer and a larger comprehension and power of totality than thought-conception can manage" (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 995). But this does not mean that reason cannot occasionally come to the aid of intuition. In fact, Sri Aurobindo welcomes such aid from reason. For instance, he says, "Intuition is unable to give us the truth in that ordered and articulated form which our nature demands. Before it could effect any such completeness of direct knowledge in us, it would have to organize itself in our surface being and take possession there of the leading

part. But in our surface being it is not the Intuition, it is the Reason which is organized and helps us to order our perceptions, thoughts and actions. Therefore, the age of intuitive knowledge, represented by the early Vedanta thinking of the Upanishads, had to give place to the age of rational knowledge; inspired Scripture made room for metaphysical philosophy, even as afterwards metaphysical philosophy had to give place to experimental Science" (*Ibid*, Vol. I, p. 103). But this must not lead us, as it has led a recent writer, to the conclusion that Sri Aurobindo looks upon intuition aided by reason as the highest form of knowledge. Nothing can be a greater mistake than this. The passage I have quoted from his book makes it quite clear that he wants this help from reason, because of the defects of mind-controlled intuition, the sort of intuition that has so far been vouchsafed to us. If intuition is freed from these defects, as it will be on the emergence of the Supermind, then no help from reason will be needed. And even when the defects of intuition are partially remedied with the help of reason, we have still to climb a great deal before we can reach that condition when we shall step out of ignorance into knowledge.

To sum up this part of my survey. For Sri Aurobindo there are various grades and types of intuition. The value of an intuition depends upon the source from which it originates. All intuitions that mankind has had so far, have suffered from this fundamental defect, that they are mind-controlled. All the defects of intuition—their flashy character, their particularity, their limited range, their lack of cohesion—are due to their being under the control of the mind. When they are under such control, some advantage may be derived by subjecting them to the rule of reason. But such help from reason cannot take us very far: it cannot enable us to reach a condition where ignorance will completely vanish. This consummation can only take place when the Supermind will descend into the Mind. Nor must we forget here the help which we receive from within, from our psychic being. It is the thousand-petalled lotus seated

in our heart which, when it opens up its petals, will cause a steady stream of light to flow into our surface consciousness.

II. DOCTRINE OF REALITY

I now pass on to the respective attitudes towards reality of these two great thinkers. Bergson has stated his conception of reality as that of uninterrupted movement, unimpeded flow. In his *Time and Free-Will* he has identified it with Time, and in his *Creative Evolution* he has called it the *élan vital*, the vital urge which goes on rushing, like a river in full flood, carrying everything before it, unhampered by any boundaries.

As I have already indicated, his conception of reality is vitally connected with his theory of intuition. If intuition reveals to us things as in the making, and not things as already made, if it enables us to grasp life in its livingness and not life as matter for history, then it follows that the true picture of reality is that of free movement. It is because the intellectualist or scientific view of reality takes away from it all this movement and life, that Bergson is opposed to it.

What is required, therefore, is to give up the guidance of the intellect and understand motion as it really is. "Let us make an effort", says Bergson, "to perceive change as it is, in its natural indivisibility; we see that it is the substance itself of things, and that movement does not appear to us any more with the instability which would render it refractory to our thought, nor does substance exist with the immutability which would render it inaccessible to our experience." (*La Perception du Changement*, p. 34).

The central idea of this whole scheme is Motion. Motion, which we may also call Becoming, gives, in Bergson's view, the true picture of reality. This is pure Heracliteanism, or perhaps it is an even more radical form of the philosophy of Becoming than Heracliteanism, for Heraclitus admitted the existence of a universal law, which he called the Divine Law of Zeus.

The one weak spot in this perfect scheme of Becoming is the presence of Matter. Bergson has been able neither to deny it nor to incorporate it fully into his system.

Let us first understand what the problem of Matter is, as understood by Bergson, and then we shall examine how far his attempt to tackle it is successful. Bergson feels that reality has two aspects: pure movement and retarded or reverse movement. Originally, of course, reality is pure flow. But it cannot continue so for ever. A time comes when its flow is retarded or reversed. That is the moment when Matter arises. Matter, therefore, is a derivative of Reality as pure flow.

After the origin of Matter a profound change occurs. Intuition, which has been so far the only faculty for understanding reality, has now to be supplemented by others for dealing with Matter. These are Intelligence and Instinct, whose function is a practical one, namely, that of dealing with Matter so that it may not suppress the current of life. Intelligence performs this function with the help of artificial tools, whereas instinct does it with the help of organic tools. The advantage of instinct is that it is more sure, while that of intelligence is that its range is practically unlimited. In what follows, I shall mainly speak of intelligence as the faculty that comes into being with the advent of Matter, for its power is much greater and it exemplifies much better than instinct the fundamental features of a faculty which is generated for the sake of controlling Matter. Matter, being itself a derivative of reality as pure flow, cannot claim to be an independent reality. But it has an important rôle assigned to it in the evolution of life, and therefore Bergson feels the necessity of positing the existence of Matter along with that of Life. But Bergson has not been able to give any logical justification for its existence. By what logic does he come to the conclusion that reality as pure flow cannot continue for ever, but must slow down? Why should it slow down at all? What can put any limit to its flow? It cannot limit itself, for all limitation, according to Bergson, is external limitation. In fact, on Bergson's principles no self-limitation or self-determination is

possible. Self-determination always means determination for the sake of something which is felt as a need of the self. When reality is conceived as pure flow which does not know why it flows or where it flows, any talk of self-determination is out of the question. Matter, therefore, if it is to limit the free flow of reality, can only do so by being an independent reality. But this would lead to dualism which, however, Bergson emphatically rejects.

Moreover, as I have pointed out elsewhere, if reality is conceived as a pure flow, not directed towards any goal, then the words 'movement' and 'reverse movement' lose all their meaning. If a movement is directed towards a goal, then another movement which takes it away from the goal, can be called a reverse movement. But where there is no goal, how can there be any direction of movement, and consequently, how can there be any talk of a forward movement or a reverse movement ?

These defects of Bergson's theory of Matter are really the defects of his unqualified Heracliteanism. Bergson, in fact, with the help of his theory of Matter, attempted the impossible task of passing from Becoming to Being. No philosophy can do without a theory of Being. Even Heraclitus felt the need of accepting a principle of order, of stability, which he called the Divine Law of Zeus. Bergson wanted to out-Heraclitus Heraclitus. In the end, he tumbled headlong into the principle of Being in the shape of his theory of Matter. His philosophy, in fact, is the best illustration of the truth: *It is possible to pass from Being to Becoming, but not from Becoming to Being.*

Sri Aurobindo does not identify Reality either with Being or Becoming, but looks upon both of these as poises of Reality. In reality, the Absolute is beyond Being and Becoming. But as we cannot conceive the Absolute in itself, in its true condition, we must, he says, "accept the double fact, admit both Shiva and Kali and seek to know what is this measureless Movement in Time and Space in regard to the timeless and spaceless pure Existence, one and stable, to which measure and measurelessness are inapplicable" (*The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 119). The most

salient features of his theory of reality we may thus state in almost his own words as follows:

There is a Supreme Reality, eternal, absolute and infinite. Because it is absolute and infinite, it is in its essence indeterminable and is indefinable and inconceivable by the finite mind. It is not describable either by negations (*neti neti*) or by affirmatives. Yet, although it is in this way unknowable to us, it is not altogether and absolutely unknowable: it is self-evident to itself and also to a knowledge of which the spiritual being in us is capable, for this spiritual being is in its essence and ultimate reality nothing but the Supreme Reality.

Although indeterminable to our mind, because of its absoluteness and infinity, yet this Supreme Reality manifests itself to our consciousness in the universe by real and fundamental truths of its being which transcend the universe and are the foundation upon which the universe rests. These truths present themselves to our intellectual knowledge as the fundamental aspects in which we see and experience the Infinite Reality.

The Supreme Reality or Brahman, as it manifests itself to our consciousness, is an eternal and absolute self-existence (*Sat*), self-awareness and self-power (*Chit-Shakti*) and self-delight of being (*Ananda*). For this reason the Supreme Reality can best be called by the name *Sachchidananda*. Its self-existence appears to us in three forms: Self, Conscious Being or Spirit, and God or the Divine Being. Or, to use the more expressive terms of our own ancient philosophy, it manifests itself as *Atman*, *Purusha* and *Ishwara*. Similarly, its self-awareness or force of consciousness (briefly called, *Consciousness-Force*) appears in three forms: *Maya*, *Prakriti* and *Shakti*. *Maya* is the force of the Absolute Consciousness, conceptually creative of all things. *Prakriti* is Nature or Force as dynamically executive, working out all things under the supervision of the Supreme Spirit. *Shakti* is the conscious power of the Divine Being which is both conceptually creative and dynamically executive.

These three aspects and these powers embrace the whole of Existence and all Nature and, if viewed as a whole, reconcile

all apparent contradictions, all apparent disparateness and incompatibility between the supra-cosmic transcendence, the cosmic universality and the separativeness of our individual existence. Taken by itself, the existence of the Absolute would be a contradiction of the relative universe, just as our own real existence would be a contradiction of the Absolute's sole incommunicable reality. But Brahman is at the same time omnipresent in all relativities; it is the Absolute governing, pervading, constituting all relativities.

How this is so, our logical reason is unable to grasp, and being unable to grasp, creates innumerable difficulties. There is the difficulty of understanding how the Indeterminable determines itself as both infinite and finite, how the One becomes an infinitely diversified multitude, how the Impersonal creates or supports an infinity of persons, and is itself also a Person. In despair, our logical reason gives up the chase and proclaims the universe to be an unmeaning jumble of phenomena. But "what is magic to our finite reason is the logic of the Infinite." The reason behind the seemingly meaningless processes is "a greater reason, a greater logic, because it is more vast, subtle, complex in its operations."

From this brief account of the nature of the Ultimate Reality as given by Sri Aurobindo, we see that the co-existence of the One and the Many, of the static and the dynamic, of the infinite and the finite in the Absolute is not a juxtaposition of mutually exclusive opposites, but is natural and inevitable. No finite can exist in and by itself; it exists in the Infinite and by the Infinite. The Infinite is not merely an illimitable self-extension in Space and Time, but is also spaceless and timeless, a self-existent Indefinable and Illimitable, which can express itself equally in the infinitely great as well as in the infinitely small. It is for this reason that the Gita says: "अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम्"

The mathematics of the Infinite is beautifully expressed in a verse of the Upanishads: "पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते". 'Subtract the infinite from the infinite, and the remainder is

still the infinite.' The Infinite does not suffer any loss or diminution by becoming Many; it remains precisely the same One which it originally was.

Sri Aurobindo therefore says: "The Maya of Brahman is at once the magic and the logic of an infinitely variable oneness" (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 70). This famous statement of his is an answer to Bergsonism as well as to Advaita Vedanta. The difficulties of both these types of philosophy are due to the failure to understand the logic of the Maya of Brahman. Its logic is magic to them, because it refuses to come under their narrow logical categories.

Its logic is the logic of the universal being of Brahman and the infinite intelligence of Maya. In order to understand it, we have to grasp certain fundamental powers or potentialities which we may equally describe as the powers or potentialities of the Infinite Reality or of its Consciousness-Force, for the Consciousness-Force is the Consciousness-Force of the Infinite Reality and has no existence apart from it. The first of these fundamental powers is the power of infinite self-variation. By virtue of it the Supreme Reality is not bound to one state or law of its action. It can be many things at one and the same time and have many different movements which to our finite reason may appear contradictory. Thus, for instance, it can be at once transcendental, universal and individual. That is to say, it can be at once (1) the supreme supra-conscious Being, aware of itself as the All-Being (Ishwara), (2) the Cosmic Self (Atman), and (3) the individual being and consciousness in all existences (Purusha).

A second power of the Infinite Consciousness is its power of self-limitation, that is to say, of self-formation into a subordinate movement within the framework of the Infinite Consciousness. This power is a necessary consequence of the power of self-variation. Each product of the self-variation of the Infinite Reality must be aware of its own self-truth and self-nature, that is, of its spiritual individuality. But apart from this individualizing self-limitation, there must be also a cosmic

self-limitation, the creation of a universe moving in its own order and a holding back of all that is not needed for that movement. The setting up of Mind, Life or Matter as independent movements is also a product of this power of self-limitation.

There is a third power of the Infinite Consciousness, namely, its power of self-absorption, of withdrawal into itself, of lapsing into absolute Silence—a state in which self-awareness exists but not as knowledge, a condition which the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad describes when it speaks of the Absolute as **बृक्ष इव स्तब्धो दिवि तिष्ठत्येकः**. This power has a luminous form as well as a dark form. In its luminous form it is called Supra-consciousness in the absolute sense. In its dark form it is called the Inconscient, for there also the being of the Infinite Reality is present, although on account of the appearance of inconscience, it seems to us an absolute non-Being. This power of self-absorption can explain how the Nirguna can stand back from the Saguna, absorbed in its own immobility, and also how consciousness can be aware of one field of being, while withholding the awareness of all the rest.

The logic of the Infinite Consciousness will also show the weakness of the Sankhya position. The fundamental mistake of the Sankhya lies in its dualism, in its detaching Purusha from the movements of Prakriti. Prakriti must be the Prakriti of Purusha. Force must be the force of the Conscious Being; otherwise force loses all its dynamism. An unconscious Force developing into life and consciousness is a contradiction in terms. It can only develop that which is already in it. If there is a deposit of consciousness even in the Inconscient, even though it may not be manifest, then only can there be any evolution of the Inconscient into life and mind.

Detachment from Prakriti is no doubt necessary for the maintenance of the freedom of Purusha, but it cannot be automatic. It must be left to the Purusha to seek it when it needs it. It is one of the fundamental powers of Purusha, as we have just seen. The initiative is always with Purusha, never with Prakriti. It is Purusha which for its own purposes may choose

to stand aside entirely from Prakriti ; it is Purusha, again, which by its power of self-variation may choose to play a more active rôle in the movements of Prakriti. In any case, Purusha is the support and lord and enjoyer of Prakriti, and not merely a silent spectator of its play.

We have so far not discussed another essential component of the triune Reality, Sachchidananda, namely, Bliss. In one sense, it is the most important of all the components, for it is that for which the other components are. It gives the reason for the world-process ; it is the 'why' of creation. So also declared our ancient sages :

“आनन्दाद्ध्येव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति ।

आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।” (Taitt. Up. III, 6).

“को ह्येवान्यात्कः प्राण्यात् । यदेष आकाश आनन्दो न स्यात् ॥”

(Ibid, II, 7).

The bliss of Sachchidananda reveals itself in an infinite multiplicity of universes. Bliss, therefore, is an inherent characteristic of every finite being and of the whole world-process. We fail, however, to understand this, because of the presence of pain and evil in the universe which we consider to be incompatible with bliss. But this is due, as Sri Aurobindo has beautifully shown, to our taking a narrow and anthropomorphic view of things and missing the broader aspects of life. Take, for instance, pain. Much of what we call pain is due to a failure to adjust ourselves to a higher level of consciousness. It is a common religious experience that what was formerly regarded by a man before conversion or before the attainment of a higher spiritual level as pain is considered by him after such conversion or attainment of a higher spiritual consciousness to be the highest bliss. To the higher religious consciousness many things which to the lower levels of consciousness are nothing but undiluted pain, appear in a new light and seem to be in the highest degree blissful. To us ordinary mortals, nothing is more painful than humiliation at the hands of our fellow-beings, but the great saint Kavira prayed to God that He

might give him humiliation as a boon. From Sri Aurobindo's standpoint, such transformation is not only possible but is a necessary condition of evolution to a higher stage.

In fact, as he carefully points out, pleasure, pain and indifference, which are our normal response to our environment, are really an imperfect response of an incomplete self. They are the response of that limited part of ourselves which we call the waking consciousness. But that is not our whole self. Behind that there is the vaster, profounder and truer region of the Supraconscious. If, therefore, "we can go back into ourselves and identify ourselves, not with our superficial experience but with that radiant penumbra of the Divine," our response to the contacts of the universe will be not pleasure, pain and indifference, but bliss.

Coming now to the problem of moral evil, the problem, Sri Aurobindo thinks, is an artificial one. It is because ethics deals with conditions of human life as we find them to-day, it is because it looks upon human institutions as they exist at present as something ultimate, that it too hastily pronounces whatever is not in keeping with them an evil. But ethics itself is a stage in human evolution and must give way to something higher than itself. This is also, I may note in passing, the view of the leading idealistic thinkers of the present day, such as Bradley and Bosanquet.

Here there is a curious agreement between Sri Aurobindo and Bergson. Bergson also believes that ethics, which deals with what he calls the standpoint of 'closed morality', has a narrow outlook and is totally incompetent to give us a true picture of the universe. It must be replaced by what he calls 'open morality' which is the morality of the mystic vision, which alone can give us a true love of humanity. But this open morality is really beyond the scope of what we call ethics, as it does not approach any problem with the help of reason but views it entirely with the aid of the mystic intuition.

In Bergson's philosophy, however, bliss has no place. This is quite evident, since he has scrupulously excluded all end or

purpose from the world-process, unless one is prepared to call the spontaneous evolution of the creative élan itself bliss. But the creative élan is neutral in quality and it is not possible therefore to call it bliss.

III. THEORY OF EVOLUTION AND CONCEPTION OF THE DESTINY OF MAN.

I come now to the last part of my task. What are the respective attitudes of Sri Aurobindo and Bergson towards Evolution and the problem of the destiny of man?

Of all philosophers of the present day in the West, Bergson has emphasised most strongly the hopelessness of the mechanical theory of evolution. His great work *Creative Evolution* is perhaps the most formidable challenge of that theory which exists in philosophical literature. It has torn into shreds all the arguments by which the mighty structure of that theory is supported.

It is unfortunate, however, that Bergson not only wanted to demolish mechanical evolution but he was equally anxious to destroy all kinds of teleological evolution. It is true that the ordinary view of teleological evolution puts forward narrow human ends which, of course, it is impossible for philosophy to accept without degrading evolution to the level of a purely anthropomorphic theory. But the remedy for this lies not in abandoning all teleology but in substituting a higher for a lower teleology.

I have shown elsewhere¹ how disastrous this rejection of all teleology has proved for Bergson's philosophy. It has taken away from his creative evolution all its creativity and has reduced it to that same dreaded mechanical evolution from which its express purpose was to give us deliverance. For what is spontaneous movement if it is not movement towards anything, what is creative evolution if it does not know what it is to create, what is self-generative action if it is not guided by any purpose?

¹ See my third article on *The Philosophy of Henri Bergson* ("Review of Philosophy and Religion", January, 1942).

In what way is such movement and such action different from the purely mechanical movement and action controlled by physical forces ?

What Bergson forgets is that freedom is not a negative but a positive idea. To be free does not mean to be free from all control, but it means to be guided and controlled solely by oneself. A free act does not mean an act which is absolutely undetermined, but it means an act which is the expression of a man's character, an action in which the full force of one's personality is felt.

The same thing is true when we pass from the individual to the cosmic plane. Creative or spiritual evolution is one in which every movement bears on its face the stamp of its spiritual origin, in which every step in the process reveals its spiritual source. If it cannot do that, then it may be anything, but it cannot be creative evolution.

Here we have a fundamental difference between Bergson's theory of Evolution and that of Sri Aurobindo. Spiritual evolution does not mean for Sri Aurobindo merely self-generative movement, but it means an evolution in which every step in the process is directed by the spirit. The spirit is also not a mere silent witness of evolution, as it is in the Sankhya philosophy, but it actively guides and directs every little movement of it.

Evolution, in fact, is the Spirit's return to itself. It is the inverse of that movement which is called involution or creation. Just as in involution the Spirit projects itself out of itself, so in evolution it comes back to itself. It comes back to itself in the reverse way to that in which it went out of itself in involution. The former process Sri Aurobindo also calls Ascent and the latter Descent. The order of involution, as stated by him is as follows: Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss, Supermind, Mind, Psyche (or Soul), Life, Matter. The order of evolution will therefore be: Matter, Life, Psyche, Mind, Supermind, Bliss, Consciousness-Force, Existence. Ascent or Evolution is only possible because there has been Descent or

Involution. Matter can evolve because there has been a descent of the Spirit into Matter. As with Matter, so also with Life, Soul and Mind. Each of these can evolve, because there has been an involution of the Spirit into it. We shall now be able to understand the meaning of Sri Aurobindo's definition of Evolution: "All evolution is in essence a heightening of the force of consciousness in the manifest being so that it may be raised into the greater intensity of what is still unmanifest, from matter into life, from life into mind, from the mind into the spirit" (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 658). This definition makes clear, firstly, that in all being or substance some part of the consciousness-force of the Spirit exists in the manifest form and the rest in the unmanifest form. If the whole of the consciousness-force of the Spirit were manifest in any being, that being would reach the summit of evolution, that is, would become identical with the Supreme Spirit, and there could not be any further evolution of it. If, again, no part of the consciousness-force of the Spirit were manifest in it, it could not evolve. Evolution, therefore, is possible only in the intermediate condition, that is to say, when part of the consciousness-force of the Spirit is manifest and the rest of it remains still unmanifest. Evolution means making more and more manifest the unmanifest consciousness-force that dwells in every being. It is therefore an ascent from a less manifest condition of the Consciousness-Force to a more manifest condition.

But evolution is not merely an ascent from a lower to a higher state of being. It is also an integration of the higher with the lower states. This means that when a higher principle emerges, it descends into the lower ones and causes a transformation of them. Thus, when Mind emerges, not only does a new principle appear on the scene, but the lower principles of Matter and Life also undergo a transformation, so that they become different from what they were before the emergence of Mind. Evolution, therefore, does not mean the isolated raising of any principle to a higher level, but an uplift and transformation of all the principles. If, therefore, a true uplift of human nature

is to take place, this cannot be effected by raising only a part of our being to a higher level, detaching it from the lower parts, but the lower parts must be transformed in the light of the higher, leading to a complete change of all the parts of our being. If mind alone receives the higher light without being able to transmit it to matter as well as the vital principle, there cannot occur a general uplift of the whole universe. This explains why, in spite of the fact that so many individuals in different lands have obtained personal salvation by detaching themselves from mind, life and matter, there has been no transformation yet of the whole world into a higher status.

The discovery of this principle of integration as a vital part of evolution is a wonderful stroke of genius of Sri Aurobindo. It at once gives a new significance to evolution which ceases henceforth to be regarded as a mere ascent from a lower to a higher level, and differentiates his theory of evolution from other theories, both ancient and modern. It is true Bergson has spoken also of the continuous swelling of the current of life as it proceeds, of the past living in the present and continuing in the future. It is true he has compared evolution to the continuous lengthening of an elastic body, to the continuous coiling of a rope. But these similes only point to the fact that evolution is a continuous process without any break or gap. They do not suggest any transformation of the lower principles by the higher. In fact, there is no place for the distinction of lower and higher in Bergson's philosophy. If evolution has no goal towards which it is moving, then the distinction between lower and higher ceases to have any meaning. For this distinction can only be maintained if some principles are looked upon as being nearer the goal than others.

Herbert Spencer, again, has spoken of differentiation and integration as two essential components of the evolutionary process. But the integration of which he has spoken is merely the structural integration of the parts. There is no question here of any higher part by its emergence leading to a transformation of the lower parts. There is no arrangement of vertical layers at

all: there is only a regrouping of what we may call the horizontal layers. Nowhere has Spencer stated that life as it emerges causes a transformation of matter or mind when it appears leads to a complete change of the nature of matter and life. Not only has he not stated this, but he has not been able even to maintain perfect continuity of evolution in the transition from matter to life or from life to mind. He has left a veil of mystery surrounding each of these transitions, and so far he has done this, his place is with the Emergent Evolutionists, although to do justice to him, it must be said that Spencer would have been the last man to bless the theory of emergent evolution.

There is a third principle involved in Sri Aurobindo's conception of evolution, and that is what he calls psychicization, that is to say, the opening out of the psychic being within. Evolution is not only a movement upwards and a movement downwards, but it is also a movement inwards. This is also a novel feature in his theory of evolution. Within us dwells a spark of Divinity, the purusha seated within our heart, the *chaitya purusha*. Evolution means the development of this psychic being, so that the pure light from it may flood the whole of our surface life, mind and matter. It is not enough to allow our surface consciousness to evolve; what is vitally necessary is that this surface consciousness should be illumined by the light of the soul. But the soul in us does not emerge full-grown; "it evolves, passes through a slow development and formation; its figure of being may be at first indistinct and may afterwards remain for a long time weak and undeveloped, not impure but imperfect."

Sri Aurobindo, however, warns us that the awakening of the soul in us and the development of our psychic being cannot alone cause that total transformation of our nature which is the goal of evolution. That is only possible through the descent of the Supermind. This descent, however, it is not possible for us by our efforts to bring about, for it requires "the sanction of the Supreme from above". But what we can do is to prepare the field, so that when the Supermind descends, it may find the

soil fit to receive it. It is precisely here that Yoga comes to our aid.

The descent of the Supermind will complete the transformation of Ignorance into Knowledge. But the process of evolution will not stop there. Henceforth it will be through knowledge, and it will not stop till the culminating point of evolution is reached, that is, when the triune principle of Sachchidananda itself will emerge. But the descent of the Supermind causes the first radical change in the character of the universe, for which the whole world is waiting.

So much for cosmic evolution. But Sri Aurobindo also takes into account individual evolution. The individual plays a very important rôle in evolution. In the involution of the Spirit into matter, the self was lost. Evolution, therefore, must have for its object the recovery of the self. This recovery is possible through the conscious individual being; "it is in him that the evolving consciousness becomes organized and capable of awaking to its own Reality". "The immense importance of the individual being", says Sri Aurobindo, "which increases as he rises in the scale, is the most remarkable and significant fact of a universe which started without consciousness and without individuality in an undifferentiated Nescience. This importance can only be justified if the Self as individual is no less real than the Self as cosmic Being or Spirit and both are powers of the Eternal. It is only so that can be explained the necessity for the growth of the individual and his discovery of himself as a condition for the discovery of cosmic Self and Consciousness and of the supreme Reality" (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 704). From this fact of the essential importance of the individual Sri Aurobindo draws the remarkable conclusion: *Rebirth is a necessity, an inevitable outcome of the root nature of our existence.*

The individual soul is the product of a plunge into self-oblivion by which the sense of identity with the universe is lost and a consciousness of separative difference comes into the forefront. The result is the formation of the body in which the

individual soul becomes conscious of itself as a separate ego. This assumption of the body we call birth, and it is through it only that it can develop itself and maintain its relations with the Cosmic Spirit. It is also through it only that the individual can recover its unity with God and thus get rid of its separateness, its ego-consciousness. Birth, thus, is a necessity of the manifestation of the soul on the material plane. But this birth cannot be an isolated phenomenon, without a past that precedes it or a future that succeeds it. Such an isolated birth in the human body would be "a freak for which the nature and system of things have no place, a contrary violence which would break the rhythm of the Spirit's self-manifestation" (*Ibid*, p. 708). Birth, therefore, must be followed by rebirth, that by another rebirth and so on. This succession of births, however, will stop with the emergence of the Supermind, for then the isolation of the individual soul will come to an end and consequently, the need of maintaining continuous contact with the cosmic soul through a succession of births.

I now come to the final question. What is the destiny of man as envisaged respectively by Bergson and Sri Aurobindo? The ultimate destiny of man, according to Bergson, is to be one with the life-current. As God in Bergson's philosophy is only another name for the life-current, we may say that the ultimate destiny of man is to be identical with God. But what does this identity with God mean? Does it mean a mere pantheistic absorption? If it does, then this destiny cannot kindle any enthusiasm in us, for what alone can satisfy us is the assurance that, retaining our individuality as men, we can still become Divine. Does Bergson give us this assurance?

Let us examine more carefully what Bergson has to say on this point. In a remarkably fine passage of his book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* Bergson, speaking of the mystic's love of humanity, says, "What it wants to do, with God's help, is to complete the creation of the human species and make of humanity what it would have straight away become,

had it been able to assume its final shape without the assistance of man himself. Or to use words which mean, as we see, the same thing in different terms : its direction is exactly that of the vital impetus — it is this impetus itself, communicated in its entirety to exceptional men, who in their turn would fain impart it to all humanity, and by a living contradiction change into creative effort that created thing which is a species, and turn into movement what was, by definition, a stop" (*The Two Sources, etc.*, pp. 200-201).

What are to make of this passage ? Here Bergson says that the mystic's love of humanity has the power of doing what otherwise we should have regarded as an impossible thing, namely, converting the human species into the creative effort itself. Does this conversion, however, which Bergson calls 'the secret of creation' leave man his individuality, allow him still to feel and think and know himself as man or does it remove all his separate consciousness and make him lose himself in the universal life-current ? Unfortunately, Bergson does not give us any indication which can justify us in thinking that he favours the first alternative.

It is true he conceives the life-current as love. But does this magic word succeed in converting an abstraction into a concrete reality ? But even if it does, it will not really meet our point. Even if the life-current is something concrete, man in becoming one with it would simply lose himself, as do the waters of the river when they fall into the ocean. Does Bergson give us any assurance that man would share a different fate ? Absolutely none.

In fact, what Bergson does is simply to identify, for the sake of the architectonic completeness of his system, the love of humanity with the creative élan. But the two things are completely different and their union is only effected by a *tour de force*. In the description given of the creative élan in his *Creative Evolution* and other works, there is no hint at all of the possibility of its being regarded as love. On the contrary,

it is definitely identified with Time, which in its turn is defined as pure flow. If Bergson were really serious about looking upon love as the impelling force of the whole process of evolution, he should have discarded completely all his earlier views of it, which identified it with Time, that is, with a pure flow. And if love is merely another name for unhampered movement, for unimpeded flow, we would much rather that Bergson never used this word at all than used it in this most perverted sense.

The really concrete end which Bergson places before us is the love of humanity. It is no doubt a great thing to look upon the whole human race as one, without making any distinction of creed, colour, sex, etc. Mankind, of course, is very far yet from attaining this ideal, as the present World War only too forcibly reminds us. Bergson also has done great service by pointing out the hollowness of the claim that it is only by becoming national that people can become international. A complete change of outlook is necessary before love of humanity becomes a living reality. All this is true, but still it does not entitle us to say that Bergson has faith in a higher destiny of man. Nowhere does Bergson say that evolution must inevitably produce a higher type of man, a type of what we may call the Divine man, radically different from the type that has so far evolved. The ideal of humanity is an ideal for the present race of mankind. This ideal has been practised and preached for centuries and centuries by various schools of religious and ethical thought all over the world; it does not require as its precondition any radical transformation of the nature of man.

Alexander has insisted more than Bergson upon the necessity of evolution producing a higher world-order, radically different from the present. The present world, he says, has developed only three principles, matter, life and mind. A fourth principle, higher than all these and radically different from them, is bound to emerge. It is an absolute necessity of evolution. This higher principle he calls deity, but the word is a general term, meaning only the next higher principle, for when

the principle of matter had only emerged, deity was the principle of mind. "For any level of existence," says Alexander, "deity is the next higher empirical quality. It is therefore a variable quality, and as the world goes in time, deity changes with it" (*Space, Time and Deity*, Vol. II, p. 348).

What, however, is *our* deity? That is to say, what is the next higher level to that which we have attained? Alexander cannot give us any idea of it; the only thing which he can say is that it is not mind, and that it differs from mind not in degree but in kind. "We cannot tell", he says, "what is the nature of deity, of our deity, but we can be certain that it is not mind, or if we use the term spirit as equivalent to mind, deity is not spirit, but something different from it in kind" (*Ibid*, p. 349).

But the question which really concerns us here is whether he gives us any hope that man can possess this higher quality deity, or in other words, whether the Being which possesses the higher quality can be looked upon as a Higher Man or a Superman. Unfortunately, we have to answer this question in the negative. He very definitely asserts that God, the Being who possesses deity, is radically different from man. Thus, speaking of the attempt made by philosophers to treat God as a greater spirit and look upon the difference between the human and the divine as one of degree, he says, "Instead of the shadowy quality of which we can only say that it is a higher quality than mind, God is made more vivid to us as a greater spirit; and we conceal the difference in kind of the divine and the human nature under magnified representations of human attributes. These are the inevitable devices of our weakness and our pictorial craving. But, for philosophy, God's deity is not different from spirit in degree but in kind, as a novelty in the series of empirical qualities" (*Ibid*, p. 350).

Another thing which we notice is that the emergence of deity does not cause a transformation of the earlier principles. The space-time matrix remains as before the steel frame within which the emergence takes place. Neither matter nor mind nor

life becomes different from what they were before the emergence of the new principle. The whole universe, consisting of the space-time framework and the principles of matter, life and mind, becomes the body of God, the Being with the quality deity. "God", declares Alexander, "is the whole world possessing the quality of deity. Of such a being the whole would be the body and the deity the mind" (*Ibid*, p. 353). There cannot therefore be a transformation of man into something higher on the emergence of deity.

I need not refer to Nietzsche, for although he coined the word Superman and was the first in recent years to insist upon the imperative necessity of the present race of men being replaced by a stronger one, yet his conception of the Superman was the very reverse of the Divine man, for it was the conception of the Asuric man, the man with the *āsurika* qualities, great physical strength, indomitable will, ruthlessness, etc. The emergence of such a man, far from indicating a higher level of evolution, is rather a distinct sign of a retrograde movement.

It is Sri Aurobindo who is *par excellence* the philosopher of the Superman, the thinker who has proclaimed more strongly than any other thinker, either living or dead, the absolute necessity of the emergence of a race of Divine Men. No philosopher in ancient or modern times has a higher conception of the destiny of man than he. No one has announced with greater conviction than he that man must exceed himself, that his destiny is not to be mere man but to be something infinitely higher.

What makes Sri Aurobindo think that man has this higher destiny? It is, in one word, the discovery of the spirituality of man. "Man's urge towards spirituality is the inner driving of the spirit within him towards emergence, the insistence of the Consciousness-Force of the being towards the next step of its manifestation" (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 843). This 'urge towards spirituality' in man is therefore the sign that when the next decisive step in evolution will occur, as it will with the emergence of the Supermind, it will occur in man.

The whole question is whether or not man is capable of rising above the level of mind. If he is incapable of rising above mentality, then the emergence of the Supermind must take place otherwise than in him. But if he is capable, then man himself will reach the Supermind and pass into supermanhood.

It is important to understand exactly what Sri Aurobindo means, for it is only too easy to misunderstand him. For one thing he does not mean any kind of humanism. In fact, humanism is not consistent with faith in the higher destiny of man. If the end of man is not to end as man, if his destiny is to rise to a higher state of being, then no point of view which cannot look beyond human needs and conditions can be said to be adequate. Moreover, there are vast regions of nature where the principle of humanism cannot be applied at all. "The attempt of human thought", says Sri Aurobindo, "to force an ethical meaning into the whole of nature is one of those pathetic attempts of the human being to read himself, his limited habitual human self into all things and judge them from the standpoint he has personally evolved, which most effectively prevents him from arriving at real knowledge and complete sight" (*The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 144). The motive force of evolution is not any ethical principle, but the urge of the Spirit towards self-expression. This urge is at first non-ethical, then infra-ethical, partly also anti-ethical, and it will be supra-ethical when evolution will reach a stage higher than the mental. Only at the present level of evolution, and that, too, with regard to a very limited part of the world, is the ethical principle important. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, says, "If, then, the ethical standpoint applies only to a temporary though all-important passage from one universality to another, we cannot apply it to the total solution of the problem of the universe, but can only admit it as one element in that solution. To do otherwise is to run into the peril of falsifying all the facts of the universe, all the meaning of the evolution behind and beyond us in order to suit a temporary outlook and a half-evolved view of the utility of things. The world has three layers, infra-ethical, ethical and

supra-ethical. We have to find that which is common to all ; for only so can we resolve the problem " (*Ibid*, p. 147).

I have now come to the end of my task. I have chosen for my comparative study two of the most volcanic thinkers of the present day, one from the West and one from the East. I could have chosen other Western philosophers for purposes of comparison, but my choice of Bergson was dictated by the circumstance that he is the most dynamic of the thinkers of the West of to-day. Bergson is perhaps one of the least systematic among the philosophers of the modern age. But system-building is not the thing we value most in a philosopher. What we value in him much more than this is his power to kindle thought, to give a new orientation, a new outlook. The greatest obstacle to the progress of philosophy is stagnation of thought, the habit of moving in fixed grooves, a false sense of respectability which makes people shrink from trying new methods. Bergson is the most uncompromising opponent of all false respectability in philosophy. For him the only thing that is respectable is the love of truth.

And an even more uncompromising opponent of all respectability and convention and an even greater volcanic thinker is Sri Aurobindo. It is not an accident that his great work *The Life Divine* has appeared at a time when the world is passing through a crisis the like of which it has not witnessed before. The tremendous enthusiasm with which the appearance of the book has been hailed all over the world proves this. The message of the book is exactly what the world needs to-day. It is the most thought-provoking and thought-shaking book that has appeared in this century. As it is studied more and more, more people will come under the influence of its vitalizing thought, and it will cause a slow and silent revolution in thought which will be extremely radical and far-reaching in its effects. For one of the effects will be the transfer of the leadership in philosophy from the West to India. Thanks to Sri Aurobindo, the leadership in philosophy, which India had enjoyed in the past and which she lost for some centuries, has come back to her. This in itself is a very great gain, but coupled with this is the

far greater gain for the whole world, namely, the spiritualization of man, leading eventually to a complete transformation of his nature. May India under the guidance of Sri Aurobindo, the prophet of the Superman, the hierophant of the New Age, fulfil again her God-appointed mission of leading the world from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to the deathless!

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The Supermind in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy

A thorough grasp of the concept of the Supermind is vital to the understanding of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy as much as it is indispensable in the practice of his Yoga. The Supermind is at once the secret of the integrality of his vision and a key to his whole scheme of spiritual *sādhana*. To achieve integralising harmony in life and thought, in realisation and self-expression, is the most dominant note of all his endeavours. And the deepest secret of this harmony—a harmony that is all-comprehensive, all-reconciling and all-consummating—is to be found in the Supramental Gnosis. That is why Sri Aurobindo's Yoga has been called Supramental Yoga, and that is why we may perhaps be allowed to characterise his philosophy, with an eye to its basic and central conception, as Supramental Idealism.

In the domain of philosophic thinking the most baffling opposition is that between the Transcendental and the Universal, between the Absolute and the World, between Brahman and Jagat. Reflection upon the general character of the world leads one by dialectical necessity to the existence of the Infinite or the Absolute as the ultimate source and ground of all existence ; but the nature of the Absolute is found to be in diametrical opposition to the specific features of the world we live in. Philosophic thought is thus compelled to drive the wedge of trenchant distinction between the two and finds no way of reconciliation between them. In consequence, either the Absolute is declared to be all-transcending and so exclusive of the world, though there seems to be no place outside of the Absolute where the world can fall, nor any means of talking away its overwhelming existence ; or, the phenomenal world is accepted as the sole reality, the Absolute being reduced to a mere creature of fancy or a shadow of thought. When an attempt is made to reconcile the two, the reconciliation takes the form of a mere assertion that they are at bottom identical, without providing any clue to the

living principle of their identity. Sri Aurobindo discovers this principle of identity in the Supramental Gnosis which is the creative medium of self-manifestation of the Absolute and which is the perfect unity of Knowledge and Life.

In the practical sphere of self-realising activity, the most persistent contradiction has been that between life and spiritual realisation, between our embodied existence in the world and our transcendent ecstasies in the subtlest ether of pure consciousness. Those who have discovered the splendours of the spirit have oftener than not looked down with contempt upon our terrestrial life which is enveloped on all sides in darkness and which is afflicted by endless sufferings and incorrigible impurities. Either then you aim at a complete transcending of your embodied existence to reside on the summits of spiritual experience or you give up the spiritual pursuit altogether and fall back into the Epicurean scheme of life. There can be no compromise, because compromise means a lowering down of the ideal and a falling short of the mark ; nay, it means perhaps self-deception and self-ruining. But yet a synthetic union of Life and Spirit is not only the irrepressible urge of our being but seems also to be the only understandable motive of creation. Life is the Spirit embodied in Matter. Now, this embodiment can have only one significance, namely, the complete self-revelation of the Spirit in Matter in the fullness of time. It is this self-revelation of the Spirit in Matter which has been variously expressed as the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, the Reign of Truth in life and society, etc. But how can this supreme consummation be achieved? Sri Aurobindo discovers the 'how' in the sovereign dynamism of the Supermind. It is impossible to fully manifest the glories of the Spirit in our life unless we radically transform all the members of our being including even the lowest by the light and power of the Supermind. Such a radical transformation is possible, because all the parts of our embodied existence have their divine counterparts in the Supermind, of which they are only projections and derivatives.

THE MEANING OF THE TERM "SUPERMIND"

Now, what is exactly meant by the term "Supermind"? Does it represent the highest summit of the mental? Does it mean the mind itself super-eminent and lifted above ordinary mentality but not radically changed? Certainly not so. In passing from mind to supermind, we are not to experience simply a change of degree, but a change of quality, a complete and radical change. The Supermind does not mean the mind lifted to its highest conceivable degree of development; it transcends even the highest summits of the mental and stands for a unique type of Knowledge and Power. Above the ordinary powers of the mind there are such higher gradations of the mental as the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind, and the Overmind. The Overmind may be said to be at the top of the lower hemisphere of existence including the physical, the vital and the mental. The Supermind is above the entire lower hemisphere and represents the creative Power or the dynamic Knowledge of Saccidānanda himself. Can it then be said that the Supermind is what is absolutely above the mental with all its gradations? Even that would not be an accurate statement. Above the mental we have not only the Supermind but also Saccidānanda and the Supreme Unknowable or the Ineffable. Just as on the one hand the Supermind is above the triplicity of mind, life and body so also on the other it is below the trinity of Sat, Cit and Ananda. For that reason the Supermind has very appropriately been called the Turiya Śakti, the Fourth Power. It is fourth in regard to the physical, the vital and the mental below, and it is also fourth in regard to Sat, Cit and Ananda above. It is the medium of self-manifestation of the higher trinity into the lower triplicity.

Is the Supermind, it may further be asked, supra-cosmic in character? Sri Aurobindo definitely repudiates any such suggestion. The supermind is, as we shall clearly see later on, essentially the dynamic Truth-Consciousness whether above or in the universe. Having created the universe, it is from the very beginning secretly or covertly operative in every part of it.

And there are clear indications that one day the Supermind will explicitly descend down into the material world and will be overtly operative in human life for the establishment of the Kingdom of Truth on Earth. All this would have been impossible, had it been supra-cosmic in nature. Furthermore, besides the material world we live in there are many other worlds or planes of existence of which the highest is the supramental world. Now a supramental world with the supermind as the basis and the dominant principle would have been impossible, had it been supracosmic in character.

THE SUPERMIND—A LOGICAL NECESSITY

The Supermind is then an intermediate principle between Saccidānanda and the world of manifestation. It is the Truth-Consciousness which creates the world and is present everywhere in the world as an ordering self-knowledge. The existence of such an intermediate principle is not only testified to by Yogic experience but is also a logical necessity. Saccidānanda in itself is a high concentration of unity, a pure unity without any extension or variation,—an absolute Indivisible without any centre or circumference. It must move out of this primal poise into a movement which is its form of Energy so that the world of multiplicity may spring into existence. The Supermind is the Knowledge-Will which brings out Saccidānanda into this creative mood and functions as the instrument of cosmic creation. Moreover the Supermind is the supreme all-determining and all-guiding principle. Saccidānanda contains within itself infinite potentiality. In the absence of a determining principle or a law of guiding truth the world which would proceed from that infinite potentiality would have been a “shifting chaos,” a “teeming, amorphous, confused uncertainty.” It is the Supermind which with its harmonious self-vision brings out certain truths perceived in the nature of Saccidānanda, gives them an articulate and coherent form and casts them into the world of manifestation. Every movement in the world, every process, is guided and controlled by some Divine Law in consequence of

which the whole world is one wonderful symphony. Also, at the root and basis of the whole world of multiplicity there is some basic Unity from which it spontaneously flows without interruption. It is the Supramental Gnosis which is in eternal possession of that Divine Law and of that basic Unity. Mind cannot fulfil these conditions of the supreme creative principle. It does not know or possess the Divine Law but is rather governed by it and is one of its results. Nor can the mind be said to be in possession of the basic Unity of things. It can at best construct schemes and limited totalities, and perceive aspects and sections of the cosmic manifold. So the Consciousness-Force that functions as the creatrix of the world must be supramental in character.

There are also some other considerations which make the Supermind a necessity of philosophic thinking. Though in speaking of Saccidānanda we name the three different factors of Sat, Cit and Ānanda,—being, consciousness and bliss,—still there is not the least differentiation in that unitarian consciousness. Saccidānanda is not Sat plus Cit plus Ananda, but is Sat which is Cit, and is Cit which is Ananda. It is absolutely indivisible and as such undividing, that is to say, it cannot be said to make any divisions or variations. So we are required to posit a creative Power of the Divine, a Knowledge-Will which according to its integral self-vision brings out of Saccidānanda its hidden multitudes. Without this dynamic self-vision of the Supermind the Divine would have been eternally wrapped up within Himself and the existence of the world would have been an irrational mystery. We are also landed in a similar paradoxical situation if we start from the analytical consciousness of the mind and admit no supramental principle of harmony between the divided mentality and the indivisible Unity. The mind essentially deals with divisions and distinctions and is by nature precluded from the perception of true unity and infinity. In reaching therefore the One and the Infinite it must completely transcend itself and be lost and even declare that it never *was*, because the mind is unaware of the secret of the derivation of the Many out of

the One. But yet the mind certainly *was*, because otherwise it cannot even be lost. Self-exceeding or self-annulment of a thing surely presupposes its prior existence ; even for a case of suicide to occur there must be a life which commits it. We must then accept the reality of the mind with all its divisions and discords, and yet we do not know how to reconcile it with the undifferentiated consciousness of the Supreme where even the mind gladly lends itself to be dissolved at a certain stage of its self-unfolding. This difficulty can be removed if we posit the Supermind which knows the Supreme both in its static nature and its dynamic play and can exhibit the divided mentality in its ultimate derivation from a certain dividing movement of its own self-knowledge. The Supermind holds in its creative Will the secret of the development of the Many out of the One and prevents by its ordering self-knowledge the endless diffusion of the Many from dissipation and disintegration. The mind which knows neither true unity nor the true origin of multiplicity,—which can neither originate plurality nor maintain it in order and harmony,—is an inferior form of manifestation of the Supermind and is a limited pragmatic function. The supermind both explains the mind in its genesis and also contains its *raison d'être*.

THE NATURE OF SUPERMIND

It should not be supposed that the Supermind is a separate self-existent principle mediating *ab extra* between the unmanifest and the manifested world, between the Divine and His self-objectification in space and time. The Supermind is indeed no other than the nature of Saccidānanda itself,—the nature of Saccidānanda not in its absolute self-existence but in its action as the Lord and Creator of its own worlds. It is Saccidānanda “not resting in its pure infinite invariable consciousness, but proceeding out of this primal poise, or rather upon it as a base and in it as a continent, into a movement which is its form of Energy and instrument of cosmic creation.”* This brings us to

* The Life Divine, Vol. I, p. 219.

Sri Aurobindo's view about one of the most formidable philosophic issues, to wit, the relation of God to the Absolute. Extreme hesitation has been felt by philosophers in identifying God with the Absolute on the following grounds. First, the Absolute conceived as the Ultimate of philosophic thought is an indivisible unity absolutely self-contained and self-absorbed, whereas God as the Most High of religion is the creator, sustainer and governor of a numberless plurality of beings. How can they be identified—a self-absorbed Unity with a self-giving Creator of plurality? Yet, with them as two irreducible and ultimate principles, we are involved in unmitigated dualism which robs even the Absolute of its absoluteness and of its “one-without-a-second” character. Secondly, the Absolute as an Infinite must be featureless and relationless inasmuch as all determination is negation, but God cannot but stand in various relations to the world and to the multitudinous creatures living there and so be possessed of infinite qualities. Thirdly, the Absolute is often rightly conceived as pure undifferentiated consciousness or non-relational experience which must by its very nature be devoid of any creative nîsus and which must in consequence be absolute Silence, whereas God is essentially an Activity, a conscious Will who calls into being and controls the universe in accordance with a harmonious vision of Truth. Now, philosophers are there who, finding no means of reconciliation between the pure unitarian consciousness of the Absolute and the dynamic or creative consciousness of God, proceed to cut out one of the terms in opposition as unreal. Some of them admit God as the sole Reality and reduce the Absolute to a mere conjunction, an arithmetical sum, of God and the world. This makes God Himself a finite Being, “an each among eaches,” at best the Monad of all monads, a *primus inter pares*. Some others consider the Absolute to be the one ultimate Reality and look upon God as a mere appearance, just a phenomenal manifestation of the Absolute. Attempts have also been made to bring them together into some sort of synthesis. One such attempt at reconciliation is to maintain that the Absolute and God are

the same Reality viewed from two different standpoints and considered in two different aspects. The Absolute is God considered in His phase of existence prior to cosmic creation ; and God is the Absolute viewed from the side of the created world. "The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view."* There is without doubt a very great truth behind this way of thinking, but precisely how the cosmic and the supracosmic standpoints are to be coherently related to each other, how the self-absorbed Absolute and the creative God can function as two aspects of the same all-comprehensive Reality has hardly been sought to be further explained and elucidated in the light of a harmonious vision of Truth.

Philosophy at its highest perceives the necessity of equating God with the Absolute but, for it, the equation or identification can at best be a mere assertion without any luminous self-justification. Our thought makes trenchant distinctions between unity and multiplicity, between Silence and Activity, between pure Knowledge and Will. It is beyond the highest reach of philosophic contemplation to reconcile them without abrogating the transcendent character of the former terms. Hegel in his eagerness to achieve a final synthesis has made them rigid logical correlatives, so much so that the One is supposed by him to be as much dependent upon the Many as the Many is dependent upon the One, the Absolute as much dependent upon the world as the world upon the Absolute. According to him, God comes to be God only as creator of the world and the absolute Unity is what it is only as a unification of a differentiated plurality. This is achieving an incomplete synthesis which shuts out a very important aspect of ultimate Reality, namely, the aspect of pure unitarian non-relational consciousness which is absolutely free from all dependence and all limitation. Sri Aurobindo points out that the secret of the completest synthesis is to be found in Supramental Gnosis which intrinsically possesses

* S. Radhakrishnan's *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 345.

indivisible unity as the basis of all its action in manifesting an ordered multiplicity and which is at once Truth-Consciousness and Truth-Will. The Supermind is at once self-knowledge and world-knowledge,—immediate awareness of essence and being and also of manifestation. Above it, it perceives the original concentrated unity of Saccidānanda, the unitarian and undifferentiated consciousness of the Absolute, but to its perception the original unity is not a mere blank but is possessed of an infinitely rich content. Surely the infinite multiplicity which is contained in the Absolute exists there in a sort of mystical latency, in spaceless and timeless potentiality. The Supermind knows this with unerring self-vision, but the Supermind is not a mere vision, a Knowledge or a Truth-Consciousness but is also a Will, a Truth-effectuation. We shall see later on how step by step the Supermind immanently develops and manifests endless multiplicity out of unity and always on the basis of unity. Its Power is the Power of Knowledge ; it is a Real-Idea which carries within itself its self-realising force. This Knowledge-Will or Real-Idea gives us a direct clue to the unity of the Absolute and God. The same reality, Saccidānanda, is the Absolute in its pure self-existence, in its aspect of indivisible consciousness, and appears as God in its action through supramental gnosis as the creator of the worlds. In essence and reality there can be no distinction between God and the Absolute, though in emphasising for the purposes of discourse now this and now that aspect or function of the same all-comprehensive Reality we may find it convenient to employ different terms on different occasions.

We now see that the Supermind which is at once a state of knowledge and a power of knowledge and which is the awareness of both the static nature and the dynamic play of the Infinite makes Reality the perfect and self-luminous unity of the Transcendent and the Universal, of the Absolute and the Relative, and of the supracosmic Silence and the cosmic Activity. But we do not wish to convey the impression that the conception of the Supermind is an absolutely novel and strange notion introduced by Sri Aurobindo. With regard to truths essential and eternal

there can perhaps be no complete innovation, though an increasingly fuller and deeper revelation may be made by subsequent seers of their precise nature and significance. The ancient Vedic seers had an unmistakable vision of the Supramental Gnosis, and they referred to it as Satyam Ṛtam Vṛhat,—the True, the Right and the Vast. The Supermind is Vṛhat, *i.e.*, the Vast self-awareness which is above the highest firmaments of the mental. In that vast self-awareness are included on the one hand the True, *i.e.*, the consciousness of essential truth of being (Satyam) and on the other the Right, *i.e.*, the consciousness of ordered truth of active being (Ṛtam). The Kena Upaniṣad speaks of three powers of the Supermind and calls them Vijnāna, Prajnāna and Sanjnāna. Vijnāna is the all-comprehending consciousness in which the original concentrated unity of Saccidānanda finds an equal self-extension. Prajnāna is the power of a projecting, confronting and apprehending consciousness in which there is an unequal concentration resulting in a fundamental self-division into Knower and his Knowledge. Sanjnāna is the supramental sense, *i.e.*, the basic power of consciousness to contact all its objects,—the power of having a direct feeling and experience of all forms, energies, qualities and substances in their proper cosmic setting without the mediation of any sense-organs or external instruments. The Īśa Upaniṣad employs the terms Vyūha, Samuḥa and So'ham in describing the nature of the same Supramental Gnosis.* Samuḥa means the gathering together of the rays into the body of the Sun of Gnosis; Vyūha is the marshalling of the rays of the Sun of Gnosis in the order of the Truth-Consciousness; and So'ham signifies the vision of that Sun's fairest form of all in which the soul possesses its infinite oneness with the Supreme Puruṣa.

THE TRIPLE STATUS OF THE SUPERMIND.

It seems now necessary to give an account, with some greater precision, of the threefold function or the triple status of the Supermind. The three poises or sessions of the supermind have

* Arya, Synthesis of Yoga, Chap. 34.

been called by Sri Aurobindo the comprehending consciousness, the apprehending consciousness and the projecting consciousness. We know that the Supermind mediates between Saccidānanda and the universe of manifestation. Now, it can perform this mediating function in so far as it is both a child and a parent,—it is the child of the self-absorbed self-awareness of Saccidānanda by virtue of its comprehending consciousness in which Saccidānanda is equally self-extended and is the parent of the lower organisations of consciousness by virtue of its apprehending and projecting consciousness which is essentially self-dividing and self-differentiating in character. “The first (poise) founds the inalienable unity of things, the second modifies that unity so as to support the manifestation of the Many in One and One in Many; the third further modifies it to support the evolution of a diversified individuality which, by the action of Ignorance, becomes in us at a lower level the illusion of the separate ego.”

Another significance of the triple status of the Supermind is that it exhibits the three principal philosophical standpoints such as Advaitavāda, Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda and Dvaitavāda as reflections of the three inseparable aspects of one integral Truth. Sri Ramkrishna, the heroic mystic who “seized the Kingdom of Heaven by assault”, uttered a very pregnant truth when he said that the doctrines of Advaita (unqualified Monism), Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified Monism) and Dvaita (Dualism) are not to be treated as rigidly exclusive and so mutually destructive systems, because they were only different stages in the same process of spiritual self-realisation. This is a truth revealed by the profoundest realisation of the Spirit. Sri Aurobindo makes a highly illuminating presentation of this truth and supplies the philosophical basis thereof. He points out that Advaitavāda, Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda and Dvaitavāda correspond to the three poises of the Supermind, to its comprehending, apprehending and projecting consciousness respectively, as they are reflected upon the calm and tranquillised mind of the spiritual seeker. So it is the triple status which affords an insight into the character of the Supermind as a mediating principle, which throws a flood of light

upon the derivation of the infinitely differentiated universe from the undifferentiated consciousness of Saccidānanda, and which enables one to reconcile the rigidly opposed philosophic stand-points into an integrality of vision.

The first and primary poise of the Supermind is Vijnāna, the comprehending consciousness. While Saccidānanda is an absorbed identity, a pure unitarian consciousness which knows no variation or extension, Vijnāna is the self-extension of Saccidānanda in an equal concentration of consciousness. Saccidānanda is a spaceless and timeless existence which, even though it may be said to contain the universe, must contain it in static potentiality and in a sort of mystical latency. Vijnāna brings it out into dynamic potentiality ready for manifestation in the realm of temporal actuality and gives it some sort of articulation. Since Vijnāna is a perfectly equal concentration of consciousness, there is in it no differentiation,—no exclusive movement to support any individualisation. Unity is the dominant feature of Vijnāna ; it holds all diversity in complete subordination to itself and serves as the basis of all movements. It is when this primary poise of the Supermind is reflected upon our stilled and purified self that we lose all sense of individuality and are led to formulate what is known as Advaitavāda (unqualified Monism).

The secondary poise of the Supermind is Prajnāna or the apprehending consciousness in which there is an unequal concentration, a centralisation and a sort of multiple distribution. The Supermind centralises here and stands back in the idea from the movement which it contains, and accompanies different individual movements as the individual Divine. The individual Divine would support and enjoy its individual movement and its relations with the One and its other forms, but yet at the same time it would also envisage its existence as only a soul-form of the One with which it is in essence identical, all difference being only a practical differentiation. Thus we find that in this secondary poise the unity of the higher poise is modified so as to support the manifestation of the Many in One

and One in Many. There is here a differentiation of the Many without any loss of awareness of the supporting and self-manifesting One. When the reflection of this Prajnāna falls upon our purified mind we have the vision of a fundamental Unity-in-Diversity or Diversity-in-Unity, and we are led to formulate what is known as Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda (qualified Monism).

The tertiary poise of the Supermind is Prajnāna in its final operation; it is the projecting consciousness in which there is multiple self-centration. In the secondary poise the supporting concentration stands at the back of the movement and inhabits it with a certain superiority to it; but in the tertiary poise the supporting concentration projects itself into the movement and gets in a way involved in it. Here the fundamental unity is further modified so as to support the evolution of a diversified individuality. It is a sort of fundamental blissful dualism in unity between the individual Divine and its universal source. But there is as yet no lapse into the ignorance of Avidyā which essentially consists in attributing existential separation to the elements of the manifold and in regarding the One as a mere aggregation. The individual Divine does indeed affirm the truth of the differentiating movement but it does so along with the truth of the stable unity without arrogating to itself any independent or separate existence. It is with a view to a kind of enrichment of the joy of unity that it insists on the joy of differentiation, both unity and differentiation being regarded as poles of the same truth, as the foundation and culmination of the same divine play. When the reflection of this tertiary poise falls upon our purified mind we are led to formulate what is known as Dvaitavāda (Dualism or Pluralism).

The above three poises of the Supermind are not in any way mutually exclusive or separate from each other. They are only three different ways of dealing with the same Truth or three inseparable aspects of the same movement of Truth-Consciousness. It is when we forget this and lay an exclusive emphasis upon this or that side of spiritual experience that the

doctrines of Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita emerge as mutually destructive schools of philosophy. In truth, however, they only translate into the terms of Logic the three aspects of the same supreme Truth-Consciousness. There is also no reason to suppose that the secondary and tertiary poises of the Supermind involve any lapse into the Falsehood and the Ignorance. They “only develop and apply in the terms of the divine multiplicity what the primary supermind had held in the terms of the divine unity”. And the divine multiplicity is an eternal fact of ultimate reality no less than the divine unity, because otherwise there could not have been an eternal recurrence of it in Time. That is why the Upanisads formulate the triple formula of supreme wisdom as: “All things are in Brahman, Brahman is in all things, all things are Brahman”. The comprehending consciousness of the Supermind ensures the truth of the Self containing all things, the apprehending consciousness ensures the truth of the Self inhabiting all things, and the projecting consciousness ensures the truth of the Self becoming all things.

SUPERMIND AND MIND.

We now understand how the Supermind starting with unity and always on the basis of unity spreads the play of infinite differentiation so that the Divine may manifoldly enjoy its manifold existence in conceptual self-extension. But all differentiation notwithstanding, there is not anywhere in the supramental functioning any trace of ignorance or any lapse into the Falsehood ; there is as yet no inconscience of the basic unity of things and no mistaking the Spirit's self-differentiation for the separation of multitudinous self-contained units. How is it then that our mind which is essentially a divided consciousness falls from the Supermind? How are we to understand the world of divided plurality sustained by the mind in its original derivation from the differentiated unity characteristic of the Supramental Gnosis? Before venturing to have a look into this mystery of cosmogenesis we should try to have a somewhat clear

knowledge of the precise distinction between mind and supermind in respect of their characteristic activities.

There is a radical functional distinction between the mind and the supermind. We have already noted that the supermind is not simply the mind itself supereminent and carried to its highest degree of development but is *toto caelo* different from the mind as day is different from night or light from darkness. But still it should not be supposed that they are separated from each other by an unbridgeable gulf, the supermind being an absolutely alien principle. Had that been the case, no statement about the nature of the supermind would have been intelligible to the mind, and all attempts to transform the mind integrally by the light and power of the Truth-Consciousness would have been foredoomed to failure. Sri Aurobindo shows that despite the radical distinction that there is between them, the mind is after all an inferior form of manifestation of the Supermind,—a lower working commissioned to fulfil a specific purpose in the process of cosmic evolution. Let us, however, first have an idea of the differences which separate them.

The Supermind is always in complete possession of Truth ; but mind can never be said to possess Truth inasmuch as all mental functioning is a mere groping in the darkness towards at best increasingly faithful reflections of Truth. The Supermind is always the disclosure of an inherent and self-existent knowledge,—the action of Vidyā ; the mind is only a power of the Ignorance moving towards knowledge and capable of receiving only a derivative knowledge,—the action of Avidyā.

The Supermind is in its essential nature knowledge by identity and oneness, whereas the mind is characterised in all its operations by a sort of inherent separatism. All the objects of supramental knowledge are embraced in its all-comprehensive consciousness and perceived as inalienably part and parcel of one self-extended and self-objectified Self. But all objects of experience are presented to the divided consciousness of the mind as separate from its own activity and as possessed of some independent reality of their own. The threefold distinction

between knower, knowledge and known is an irreducible feature of all mental functioning. Realism erects this distinction into ontological separation and shows us the way to unmitigated pluralism. Idealism endeavours to conceive of an inclusive self-distinguishing self-consciousness or self-explicating Experience within which the distinction may fall, but cannot carry to our heart full conviction due to the lack of any support of concrete experience. It is when a man ascends to the supramental that he can luminously realise how the multitudinous objects of knowledge are the becomings of one Self and are therefore to be known in their true nature through perfect oneness of being. The Supermind knows, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "by a pure awareness of the self-truth of things in the self and by the self, ātmani ātmānam ātmanā".

Since the Supermind knows by identity, the supramental knowledge is characterised by perfect immediacy and absolute self-certitude. The mind in its cognition can never do away with mediation and can never guarantee the validity of its own apprehended truths. Psychology has now made it common knowledge that even what we call direct perception of objects is not wholly direct or immediate. I perceive an orange before me. Now this perception of the orange is manifestly a presentative-representative process. It is only a certain yellow patch of colour which is perhaps directly presented to me. My perception of the orange as an object localised in space and having a number of other qualities besides colour is surely brought about by the representation of those other qualities on the basis of the presented datum and also through the unconscious operation of such ground-conceptions or categories of thought as substance, causality, etc. Moreover, the entire psychological phenomenon of perception is mediated by some physical and physiological processes such as transmission of ethereal vibrations, functioning of sense-organs, proper working of the nervous system, etc. It is therefore quite natural that the object of perception should in varying degrees be coloured and modified by the intervening factors. Sense-organs are for

that reason regarded in Indian Philosophy more as the restricting and limiting conditions of knowledge than as the avenues of knowledge. But it may be asked, What about our cognition of the bare sense-datum, say, the yellow patch of colour of the orange? Modern realists hold that the sense-datum or *sensum* is an external entity which is known by acquaintance, *i.e.*, directly known without the intervention of any mediating agency whatsoever. But what constitutes the connecting link between the mind and the external *sensum* which is admittedly separate in existence? Realism has no satisfactory reply to give and frankly admits the mode of cognition of the sense-datum to be unique and further inexplicable. But yet the *sensum* is after all an abstracted feature of a concrete object the apprehension of which can hardly be said to amount to knowledge. Moreover, we cannot ignore the mediation of physiological processes even in the case of an awareness of the bare *sensum* in so far as it is embodied in an actual physical object. But in supramental knowledge there is no need for the mediation of any *tertium quid*, any third entity; supramental knowledge is completely self-mediated because all its objects are the becomings or differentiations of its own self. And precisely for that reason it is also self-certifying and does not depend for its verification upon any foreign authority or external criterion.

Again, the mind is essentially a thing of discord and disharmony, while the supermind is a thing of concord, harmony and integral unity. Knowledge, emotion and will are three principal factors or functions of the mind, and they appear not only to be divided from one another but are found very often in conflict and antagonism. We may often have the will to achieve a thing but not sufficient knowledge at our disposal to facilitate the achievement; or, we may have knowledge about a thing but no driving power of a strong will-to-do to mobilise that knowledge for practical realisation. Similarly we may have intense feeling, very deep love and sympathy for a certain cause, but both knowledge and executive capacity may fail us in translating that feeling into active service. Moreover there is to be

noticed in the nature of most individuals the overwhelming preponderance of one of them over the rest. A man of action has an invariable tendency to disdain the flights of speculation and to attach scant importance to the finer sentiments of human nature. A man of contemplation, on the contrary, generally looks down upon a life of unceasing action and a nature with overwhelming emotional susceptibilities. A man of emotional exuberance, however, finds contemplation to be too dry a thing to be cultivated and action to be too rough and perturbing a path to follow. Thus the necessity is imposed in our life for the development of one of them at the expense of the rest. That is why geniuses among us are oftener than not instances of one-sided development in an extraordinary measure of this or that particular faculty of the mind. That is also the reason why the Jnanayogi, the Karmayogi and the Bhaktiyogi often fail to understand one another, and each extols his own line of progress to be the best and superior to the rest.

There is discrepancy not only between knowledge, emotion and will but also in the heart of each of them. The mind entertains a bewildering variety of ideas and thoughts but hardly succeeds in converting them into a perfectly self-coherent whole. This applies no less to the variety of multi-coloured feelings and to the multitude of mutually conflicting desires and volitions which endlessly surge up in our mind. Moreover, at the mental level, the phenomenon of Knowledge is split up into Knower, Knowledge and Known, the phenomenon of Emotion into Enjoyer, Enjoyment and Enjoyed, and the phenomenon of Work into Agent, Action and Consequence. These different factors tend to fall apart and enjoy separateness of being, so that we frequently have them in varying degrees of isolation one from another. For example, the knower feels the inadequacy of his knowledge and seems to acquire whatever little knowledge he does possess from without ; the object of his knowledge on the other side seems always to elude his grasp as an independent entity endowed with endless determinations.

But in the supermind all the discords and disharmonies of the mind are reconciled in a natural and spontaneous harmony. All the divisions of our mentality appear there as only distinguishable aspects of an integral unity. Let us quote here at some length Sri Aurobindo's own words about the harmonious and integral character of the Supramental Gnosis: "The thoughts of the supramental reason", says Sri Aurobindo, "meet together and understand each other and fall into a natural arrangement even when they have started from opposite quarters. The movements of will that are in conflict in the mind, come in the supermind to their right place and relation to each other. The supramental feelings also discover their own affinities and fall into a natural agreement and harmony. At a higher stage this harmony intensifies towards unity. The knowledge, will, feeling and all else become a single movement. This unity reaches its greatest completeness in the highest supermind. The harmony, the unity are inevitable because the base in the supermind is knowledge and characteristically self-knowledge, the knowledge of the self in all its aspects. The supramental will is the dynamic expression of this self-knowledge, the supramental feeling the expression of the luminous joy of the self and all else in supermind a part of this movement."* So integral unity is of the very essence of the supermind, and an all-reconciling vastness its dominant character. Our mind appears to be a very poor thing by contrast,—a narrow, self-discordant, limping function.

DERIVATION OF MIND FROM SUPERMIND.

We now see what vast difference separates the mind from the supermind. But still we cannot say that there is an unbridgeable gulf between them. We have already noted that the mind is after all an inferior mode of working of the supermind. But the question is sure to be raised: How is that conceivable? How can the mind which is a power of Avidyā be linked up with the Supermind which is an action of Vidyā,

* Arya Vol. VII, Synthesis of Yoga, Chap. 70.

the vast Truth-Consciousness? How are we to understand the fall of consciousness from the supramental to the mental, from Knowledge into the realm of Ignorance and Falsehood? This is a very deep and large question, and a satisfactory answer to it can hardly be compressed within some few pages of writing. We shall, therefore, indicate here only the general lines on which a solution of the problem can be formulated to our consciousness.

The mind is in its essence not a separate but only a subordinate function and instrumentation of the supermind. Our ignorant mind has its divine counterpart in the supermind. This divine Mind functions through what has been called Prajnāna or the apprehensive and projecting consciousness of the Gnosis. The creature mind which functions through us—the mind which depieces and aggregates *ad infinitum*—is the result of an exclusive concentration of consciousness in pursuance of the principle of separation with a view to the utmost development of multiplicity. It is an operation of consciousness separated by Ignorance from the projecting consciousness of the Supermind, and Ignorance itself is nothing but an exclusive concentration intended to serve a specific purpose. Let us look a bit further into the matter.

The supreme Absolute whose highest formulation to us is Saccidānanda is the pure unitarian indivisible invariable consciousness. The infinity of this supreme Absolute is first translated into an infinite extension in conceptual Time and Space by the comprehending movement of the Supermind. There is not the least trace of differentiation or individualisation in this equal pervasive conceptual self-extension of the One. Then, secondly, the omnipresence of the One in that conscious self-extension is further translated into a plurality of the Conscious Soul or Puruṣa through the apprehending action of the Supermind. Here is to be noted the first fundamental self-division in the self-knowledge of the Supreme. The One differentiates itself into a multiplicity of soul-forms or Puruṣas each of which supports and accompanies a definite indivi-

dualised movement of its consciousness. We have here for the first time a division between Knower and Knowledge, between *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, between Creator and Creative Force. But there is no shadow of ignorance here. Every individual Self or *Jivātman* realises itself as only a differentiation of one all-comprehensive Self, and does not forget in any of its actions or movements the fundamental all-pervasive Unity. Thirdly, the multiplicity of soul-forms is further translated into a divided habitation of the extended unity through the projecting action of the Supermind. At this stage, the Individual Divine gets in a way involved in the individualised movement of consciousness which it supports, and behaves as if it were a separate being from other self-forms of itself. He views and governs the relations of each soul-form of himself with other soul-forms from the standpoint of Will and Knowledge appropriate to each particular form. But it is as yet only "as if", for there is no delusion for the Individual Divine which is fully aware of the all-permeating unity of the Supreme though it behaves as if it were exclusively identified with a particular soul-form of the One in order to enjoy that unity in a unique manner.

There is as yet no lapse from Knowledge but rather a self-aware self-enjoyment of the One in and through its countless self-differentiations. It is this final phase of the movement of the Supermind that we may call the Divine Mind, because though there is no trace of self-forgetfulness here still there is a sort of piecing or delimitation. The delimitation arises from the soul's adopting a particular standpoint from which it seeks to view other well-distinguished forms and forces, but still there is no real limitation in so far as the soul uses and is not used by its defining power,—the delimitation is subordinate to and dependent upon its awareness of the basic unity and infinity of the Supreme.

The creature mind which functions through us loses direct touch with the self-awareness of the Supreme. It erects the self-differentiations of the One into a separation of self-existent units. In order to understand the transition from Supermind

to Mind we must bring in a new factor, namely, Avidyā. It is Avidyā or Ignorance which brings about a fall of consciousness from the self-differentiating self-awareness of the One into the divided exclusively self-centred awareness of the Many. Sri Aurobindo, however, repudiates the suggestion that this Avidyā is a foreign agency or a total negation of consciousness springing from somewhere and intervening somehow to project a world of Ignorance on the locus of pure knowledge and consciousness. That would not only make Avidyā an irrational mystery flatly contradicting the essential nature of the Supreme but would also render the transition from Supermind to Mind a final inexplicability and not a luminous self-transition of consciousness flowering into objective self-fulfilment as it really is. Avidyā is, in truth, an action of consciousness itself, an exclusive concentration of consciousness on a particular form of existence and a particular standpoint. We have seen that at the final stage of action of the Supermind, the Individual Divine gets in a way involved in a differentiated movement of consciousness though it never loses sight of the self-differentiating One. We have the beginning of Avidyā when by exclusive concentration the individual self gets further involved and identifies itself with that movement to such an extent that it forgets its essential nature as one among many soul-forms of an identical all-embracing Self and looks upon other differentiated forms of existence as separate from itself. Mind is the result of this self-forgetfulness on the part of the individual Self,—the offspring of its exclusive self-identification with a particular temporal and spatial action which is only a part of its own play of being. This exclusive concentration or self-identification which is of the essence of Avidyā is a mode of operation of consciousness of the Divine Himself determined by His own Will for a unique mode of self-fulfilment or self-manifestation.

Further light is thrown upon the fall of mind from supermind and upon the lapse of consciousness from Knowledge into Ignorance when we take cognizance of the principle of Knowledge-Ignorance functioning as an intermediate link be-

tween the two hemispheres of Knowledge and Ignorance. While Supermind is an action of Vidyā, and Mind an action of Avidyā, Overmind is Vidyā-Avidyā-mayi. On the one hand, it is in direct and immediate communication with the full plenitude of Knowledge and on the other it lays the foundation of all movements of Ignorance. It is, says Sri Aurobindo, "the original Māyā, not a Māyā of Ignorance but a Māyā of Knowledge, yet a Power which has made the Ignorance possible, even inevitable." The Overmind is, as a sort of inferior Supermind, a principle of Cosmic Truth with a vast and endless catholicity as its very spirit; its energy is an all-dynamism as well as a principle of separate dynamisms. We know that though ultimate reality is a unity, still it is not a blank featureless unity but a unity with infinite content and as such possessed of an infinity of aspects and powers. The one essential function of the Overmind is to take each Aspect and Power and give to it an independent action in which it acquires a full separate importance, and is able to work out its own world of action. It is for this reason that while some realise God as Personal, others declare Him to be Impersonal; while some realise Him as Saguna, others affirm that He is Nirguna; while again some perceive Him to be dynamic, others hold that He is static. To the global and catholic Overmental consciousness all the above affirmations are different formulations of one cosmic whole and not mutually exclusive rigidities. But though the Overmind releases the different Powers of the Reality into independent action and allows them to develop the consequences of that independence, still there does not as yet creep into it any ignorant separativeness. Though the dynamic movement of Overmind is not directly determined by the fundamental unity of things, still it knows that unity in a spiritual cognition and has to rely upon it for its security. But there is something in the nature of the Overmind which not only may but must make consciousness descend further and further. We have seen that the Overmind's essential function is to loose into action the different Powers and Aspects of Reality. So it may and

for a certain purpose should admit the principle of separation and allow the power of separation also to develop the complete consequences of its independent action. It is by pursuing the principle of separation that consciousness begins increasingly to descend. At a certain stage of this descent, Consciousness-Force may so emphasise the different movements created by the Overmind and so hide the basic and pervasive unity of the Real that Mind gets separated by an exclusive concentration from the Overmental source. This separation is the separation of the Cosmic Ignorance from the Cosmic Truth, and the veil which is created here is opaque so that the transmission of the Overmental light to the Mind is only occult and obscure. The cosmic Mind in the Ignorance may indeed comprehend its own unity but it is not aware, or at least has not the enduring experience, of its source and foundation in the Spirit. The last stage in the descent of consciousness is reached when it falls completely asleep and assumes the form of inconscient Matter which is the source of all sorts of error and falsehood that disfigure our terrestrial existence.

From the account given above of the derivation of the Mind from the Supermind through the mediation of the Overmind, and of the gradual descent of consciousness culminating in the inconscience of Matter, it will be evident that our embodied existence in the world is not the creation of any alien non-spiritual power or principle, but is rather the manifestation of the manifoldly self-expressive Spirit itself. Just as the mind is the inferior manifestation of the Spirit's Gnosis, so matter is the expression in the Ignorance of the substantiality of the Spirit, and life is the manifestation in the Ignorance of the energy of the Spirit. The whole descent and manifestation is conditioned by the creative activity of the supermind and is sustained by the supermind's ordering self-knowledge implicitly operative from the beginning in every part of the universe. So it emerges as a clear possibility that if we can make the supermind overtly operative in our life and, tearing aside the veil of Ignorance, allow it to pour its full flood of light and power into the differ-

ent members of our being such as the physical, the vital and the mental, the foundation will be laid for a divine transformation of our existence in the world. There is indeed no reason why the all-transforming touch of the supramental Truth-Consciousness should not be able to convert the lead of our mortal existence into the gold of divine immortality and thus fulfil the persistent aspiration of humanity for bringing down the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth.

PROF. HARIDAS CHAUDHURI

Towards a new World

Again and again in his history man has found himself forced into a condition of war by circumstances over which it would seem he had no control. Where he was not an aggressor he had at least to be the defender of his rights and *lebensraum* against the encroachment by a powerful invader. Anyway, violent hostilities have come to be a recurrent phase in the community-life of man. War is certainly an evil, but it has not been in the past an unmixed evil. If to the path of peace man owes much of his progress, not a little of it he owes to the path of war, despite the miseries it has brought for him. From a longer view of its ultimate effects, war would appear to have been a useful factor in the growth of human collectivities. But why war at all? The fact is that as evolutionary Nature cannot stop from her upward movement she goes on fulfilling herself in and through the cosmic process regardless of the nature of the means she employs for the achievement of her supreme aim. Yet is conflict not always her favourite method. Human history is not throughout a black record of wars and hostilities. It has its periods of light when the world has been illumined by the advent of saints, seers and prophets who by their life and teachings have proclaimed to man that in peace lies the true foundation of life and that it can thrive only on Truth, Love, Freedom and Unity which are the very nature of his soul 'in which alone Peace hath its eternal abode.' They have indeed emphasised in unmistakable terms that for his growth towards Light, towards the higher destiny of which he is capable in his terrestrial evolution man must live in his soul and realise these ideals in his life. This is Nature's way of balance and harmony. It is not that these teachings have always been entirely slow and uncertain in working their way into the heart and soul of man. Some of them have produced in the inner world of man more revolutionary changes than have

actually been caused in his outer life by any violent conflict that breaks out in the battle-field. But they are of a different character, and have always helped forward the spiritual progress of man by intensifying his Godward endeavours, his soul's aspiration for a greater fulfilment that would take him to the goal for which he, or rather Nature in him, is always striving. There is no doubt that man, especially so far as his spiritual evolution is concerned, has been immensely enriched and exalted by the truths revealed to him by those true uplifters of the race. But the fact also cannot be disguised that his progress and civilisation have been not inconsiderably accelerated by the clashes that have taken place in his collective life as, of course, a part of Nature's plan realising itself under the stress of those forces which dominate man when he gravitates exclusively towards vital satisfactions, when he panders to his individual and collective egoism, and forgetting his high destiny, ceases to make any serious effort to actualise in his life the ideals held aloft by the great masters. This is a state in the affairs of man which tends to dry up all springs of real progress and threatens to imprison the soul rendering all spiritual endeavour difficult, if not impossible. The death of many civilisations in the past has been more or less due to such retrograde movements of the collective being to which they belonged.

History from its very dawn testifies that even a long and unhampered period of peace has rarely proved a guarantee of continued cultural advancement. Almost often it has been found to beget such ease-loving, therefore, demoralising tendencies as always destroy in the nation or the people all its grit, vigour and initiative, so much so that it soon shows signs of decadence which never allows any new going forth, any fresh adventure. What has happened in many instances to serve as a way out of such a moribund state is an incursion or onslaught from outside by barbarians or by a stronger power whose impact infuses new energy into the people; or a farsighted statesman or a heroic builder rises in it, and by his power, sometimes derived from a higher source, quickens into activity the whole

people holding before it a glowing ideal for which it is inspired to live and die, with the result that the people is reborn into virility and greatness—this again becoming ultimately responsible for excessive self-glorification, often leading to conflict with others who may happen to stand in the way of its political or regional expansion. Thus it seems that war is a phenomenon which has been unavoidable under the order of things in which man has so far found himself. Human groups and collectivities have in most cases been formed and organised through the clashes and collisions in the earlier stages of man's social living bringing home to him the necessity of strengthening his community-life so that when necessary, and there has never been any dearth of pleas for that, it may extend the sphere of its existence or defend it against attacks from outside. But what is more is that, apart from the various constructive movements and institutions which conflicts between nations or peoples throughout history have been found to have brought into being, they have served a yet greater purpose by giving an amazing impetus to the creative faculties of the peoples involved stirring them into a new life, into new ideas, into new channels of self-expression by which they produce what turn out to be so many steps forward in the general progress of mankind. The English historian utters a great truth when he says that civilisation advances by powder-carts. A yet profounder truth is suggested in the saying of Heraclitus that War is the father of all things ; War is the king of all. There is another reason why Nature adopts this drastic method when she finds peaceful means not fully effective. It is that she is against the old order of things to continue for a long time and that she abhors unnecessary delay in the completion of her work in the terrestrial evolution. She is here the Mahakali, "the Warrior of the Worlds who never shrinks from battle, who has in her an overwhelming intensity, a mighty passion of force to achieve, a divine violence rushing to shatter every limit and obstacle. All her divinity leaps out in a splendour of tempestuous action ; she is there for swiftness, for

the immediately effective process, the rapid and direct stroke, the frontal assault that carries every thing before it."

It seems that some kind of strife is at the root of everything by which Nature keeps up her progressive movement towards her evolutionary goal. The world itself, it may be said, is born out of the clash of material and other forces, and it proceeds by perpetual struggle against those that oppose its onward march, ever creating new things, ever destroying the old, and leading through whatever trouble and apparent confusion towards the approximation to some divine revelation. Whatever that may be, "this is certain that there is not only no construction here without destruction, no harmony except by a poise of contending forces won out of many actual and potential discords, but also no continued existence of life except by a constant self-feeding and devouring of other life. Our very bodily life is a constant dying and being reborn, the body itself a beleaguered city attacked by assailing, protected by defending forces whose business is to devour each other: and this is only a type of all our existence. The command seems to have gone out from the beginning, "Thou shalt not conquer except by battle with thy fellows and thy surroundings; thou shalt not even live except by battle and struggle and by absorbing into thyself other life. The first law of this world that I have made is creation and preservation by destruction." War and destruction, it would seem, are a universal principle of our life; and they also appear to be unavoidable. And their necessity in the plan of Nature is indicated by the fact that since evolution is a kind of rebirth of the old into newer and better forms, the old must go; and when, as often, it does not, but rather is fondly clung to, Nature is forced to use her deadly weapon of war to destroy the old and the effete so that the new may come into being and grow in freshness and vigour. In this way the cycle goes on, war helping to keep up this continuous flux of things towards greater and unrealised possibilities. In every field of human activity no movement has ever made any progress without a struggle, a battle between what exists and lives and what seeks to exist and live

and between all that stands behind either. "It is impossible, at least as men and things are, to advance, to grow, to fulfil and still to observe really and utterly that principle of harmlessness which is yet placed before us as the highest and best law of conduct." The power of the soul can of course obviate any such external clashes. But it cannot be so easily evoked, and when its effective use has been possible, it has been found to have been more terrible and destructive in its results than the sword and the cannon. The triumph through soul-force of Vasistha over the military prowess of Viswamitra is an appropriate instance. Anyway, infliction of violence on others, whatever might be the means or provocation, cannot be stayed by any external method. To abstain from violence simply because it involves killing is to deny the very law by which humanity is at present guided. The debt of Rudra must be paid, the Lord of destruction must be appeased so long as the Asuric force in men and nations, that enemy of the Divine, is not completely annihilated. The promised Dharmarajya, the Kingdom of Righteousness, of which God will be the sole ruler, can be founded on earth only when it will be freed from the influences of the demon.

But the deeper root of all conflicts both in his inner and outer life into which man finds himself dragged by an inscrutable fate lies in the very nature of the terrestrial existence whose inward meaning remains hidden so long as the approach to it is not made with reference to the secret aim of Nature in the evolutionary unfolding of the earth. The Divine is there in the earth but suppressed in its phenomenal opposites. The destiny of the earth is to awake to the divinity concealed in it by breaking through its bondage to ignorance and to the obscurities of mind, life and matter, which stand in the way of every endeavour, and by consciously co-operating with Nature, arrive at the end, intended by her, as the culmination of all its struggles and strivings necessitated by the resistance given by the forces of Darkness to the emergence in the earth-life of the powers of Light which through their instruments seek to help Nature in her work of preparing the earth for a greater Manifestation.

Man as the apex of creation represents the essential nature of the earth constituted by these lower and higher principles who struggle against each other for supremacy in him. Nature chooses man as the immediate field of her work, because he has arrived at a stage in his evolution in which he must be made ready for the next higher stage through the victory in him of his higher nature over the lower for which the conditions in the earth are becoming favourable. There is in man an ascending urge which by Nature is rekindled into a flaming aspiration to grow in his higher nature towards the Light whose instrument he must become in order to be able to take part in that Manifestation. Man will have therefore to discover in him his psychic being, that entity of his soul in his life, mind and body, which, deriving its evolutionary motivation from the Supreme Shakti who in one of her aspects is the evolutionary Force herself, seeks through the cycle of births to fulfil itself in the process of evolution. It is to this Shakti that man must open, and be plastic enough for her Light to come and descend into him and purge him of all his turbidities and mould him into an expression of the Divine. But being at present conditioned in Ignorance and in all that it has erected in its dark region for the maintenance of its domination over him, man, when he hears the call of the Mother and takes the decision to respond to it, come what may, finds himself confronted by formidable odds presented by the evils whom he has allowed to rule his present existence. These evils with all their might try to keep him down under their subjection and frustrate his endeavour to turn towards the Light and to find there his perfection. Yet they have their value in the scheme of things, since they give man an opportunity to fight and thereby gather in the experience and strength by which he would win his ultimate victory and possess its fruits and assimilate them to the enrichment of his whole being. Struggles therefore are a necessity and their importance in any spiritual effort, no less than in any secular, cannot be over-estimated. Though in fact it is not the human individual, but the Supreme Shakti herself, who has always done and is always doing every

bit of upward climbing for her creatures, yet nothing proves wholly effective in the process of evolution unless and until a conscious co-operation is given to her through a complete surrender to her Will so that she may perfect the instrument and divinise it. Thus in individual life as also in that of the collectivity the march of Nature goes on and becomes enlivened and accentuated by every opposition, oppositions of the earth which with their increasing momentum hasten the revelation to man of the luminous guidance of heaven's Light.

War is a phenomenon that does not owe its origin to any external cause, neither does it appear for the singular purpose of fulfilling any external objective. The Supreme Shakti wants it and will continue to do so so long as man does not obey her Law and accept her as the sole ruler of his life and become the willing field of her work in the terrestrial evolution. War has therefore a role, not insignificant, to play in the evolutionary plan of Nature. Life has been characterised as a battle. And indeed a battle it is, as it was to the Vedic Seers who in a mystic image represented "the life of man as a thing of mixed truth and falsehood, a movement from mortality to immortality, from mixed light and darkness to the splendour of a divine truth whose home is above in the Infinite but which can be built up here in man's soul and life, a battle between the children of Light and the sons of Night, a getting of treasure, of the wealth, the booty given by the gods to the human warrior, and a journey and a sacrifice." In every Godward endeavour, in every upward striving, man is assailed by hostile and undivine forces, the Panis, the coverers of light; and if and when he gives in, as he often does, he loses the battle for the time being. If, instead, he wakes up from his sleep in Ignorance and becomes conscious of his high destiny, as well as of the Mother in him who is the only source of his strength, and gives a courageous fight to the enemy in the name of the Mother, then victory will be his and all the riches of a heavenly life. War will be for ever banished from the earth not merely when man will realise its futility, as he has already begun to do, and try by the power of his mind

to make it impossible but when he will be able to conquer the foes grown in him out of his baser instincts which are responsible for all the conflicts in his community-life, developing in his individual life into all those obscurities, the sons of Night, who obstruct the dawn in him of his infinite existence for which his present life in ignorance is in travail. Nevertheless, war is an evil, a monstrous evil, and it must go. It has existed long having fulfilled the purpose of Nature in the making of what man and his world are today. Time has now come for man to outgrow the stage when war was a contributory factor in his own growth as well as in the growth and expansion of his civilisation and collective being. But it will not stop only on our wishing it. The mechanical way in which it was sought to be ended has failed and will always fail, because as we have said, war has its origin deep in the inner laws that guide the evolution of the cosmic system and direct the procession of humanity towards its divine goal. The modern mind is so much obsessed with its achievements in the outer court of life, so much hedged in by an exclusive inclination to be satisfied with mere externalities, that it is incapable of looking beyond the surface-view of things, and is too much prone to rely on the values of science and reason, the values of all extrinsic attempts to solve a problem which is so fundamentally intrinsic. Science has provided man with enormous powers which are proving far beyond his present capacity to properly manipulate. And if man is not able to attain sufficient psychological development, he will either be crushed out of existence by the deadly weapons he has himself forged with the help of his science or revert to a stage of barbarism. There are thinkers who believe that science may make war of the present type with shot and shell and mines and battleships an impossibility and yet develop or leave in their place other and simpler means which may bring back the type of ancient warfare. But that is no solution of the problem. The terrible horrors of war may lead human reason to make a long peace possible, based on common community interests and mutual well-being; but so long as the nature of man remains

as it is the peace will come to an end under the stress of human passions. Biologically, war may cease to be a necessity. The fullness of life which modern world has developed into may, if reason so wants, bring about an equilibrium in the material life of man ; but that also will not change his heart. So long therefore as war is not made psychologically impossible it will remain, and the utmost that the superficial efforts towards its elimination can do will be to shorten or lengthen the interval between its recurrence according to the nature of the effort and the acceptance of its results by humanity. The fact is that what is within must come out. The hostilities that break out in the open field of man's collective life will cease for ever only when man will win a decisive victory in his inner individual world over the forces of his lower nature. Disarmament will defeat its own purpose if man is not disarmed of his baser instincts. The explosion of a bomb does invariably have behind it the explosion of the passions that rage in man and burst out when ignition is given to them by conflict of ideals or clash of interests in the external sphere of human activity. The pity is that every consideration of the problem has ignored the one thing that matters, human nature. The last Great War stimulated the mind of man to think out the problem, but not a single plan for the reconstruction of the world from which, it was hoped, war will be tabooed, pointed out, far less emphasised, that the root of the evil lies deep in the very nature of man. It is exceedingly unfortunate that every scheme or plan that is being put forward for bringing about a new order after the cessation of the present hostilities should consider only the political and economic aspects of the problem and never the spiritual aspect of it, thereby repeating the same mistake as before which is no longer a mistake but will prove to be a colossal blunder in that the future of humanity depends so much on how the problem will be tackled, and how far real and lasting will be the solution arrived at. And, why only the problem of reconstruction? All major problems, those of freedom and unity in particular, man has not so far been able

to successfully handle. But what is deplorable is not so much his failure to find out a solution,—because that is difficult if not impossible with even the highest of his mental power that he can possibly possess,—as his incapacity to trace it to its proper origin. “All social and political endeavours turn always in a circle and lead nowhere; man’s life and nature remains always the same, always imperfect, and neither laws nor institutions nor education nor philosophy nor morality nor religious teachings have succeeded in producing the perfect man, far less a perfect humanity,—straighten the tail of a dog as you will, it has been said, it always resumes its natural curve of crookedness.” This is the beginning of a new approach to all problems of humanity. The march forward is certainly there in everything that man has so far achieved by the power of his mind. But our estimate of it must be revised in the light of what it has resulted in. No wonder that the brutal exhibition of savage instincts that we are witnessing before our eyes today should make us question the much-vaunted superiority of the modern civilisation whose sponsors are themselves bewildered at the destruction that is being threatened of all higher values that have so long sustained man’s urge towards perfection. Yet in the midst of the thick gloom that envelops the world today gleams of a coming dawn are beginning to be visible. The higher mind of humanity, represented by a very few individuals, are opening to the truth that man as he is now is unequal to the task of saving himself from the disasters that are growing every day; he must therefore change in his consciousness so that he may be able to get at the true truth of things and on it to rebuild his life and society. This is touching only the fringe of the solution. The greater truth has yet to come, or rather, it has come but has yet to enter the consciousness of humanity, at least, of its thinkers who are open to new truths. Nevertheless, the idea that a change must come in the outlook of man so that a better order of things may come about, as well as the fact that man is feeling the shock of war too severe and is trying by all means to eliminate it from the face of the earth are evidences of the

possibility that the days of war are numbered and that a new turning-point in the history of man is very likely to come indicating a greater future for him. But the difficulties in the way to such a consummation appear to be formidable. How can man by himself change into a higher consciousness with his present nature remaining imperfect? And how can he perfect his nature if he cannot liberate himself from his bondage to Ignorance, and liberate his spirit from its veil of life, mind and body? The answer to these questions must come from within, and it will depend largely on the readiness of man to hear the Call and accept its Guidance.

Excessive life satisfaction and an unexampled mastery in the world of matter have on the one hand given man enormous powers by which he has erected the vast structure of his civilisation, while on the other hand the same powers have enslaved him into victims of Asuric forces who are always ready to give him every help in his endeavour to pander to his egoistic impulses that exhibit themselves in the glorification of man above everything, above even his own spirit whose call he has heard in rare moments but has never had the strength to respond lest he should lose in his credit as the creator of his world of dazzling wonders which proudly proclaim the unique victories of the creative man who is lured into the conviction that it is he and none else who is its sole builder. Thus is man tempted away from God and is encouraged to worship the Titan whose hold on him increases in the measure he receives his help and thereby allows himself to be ruled by him. Not only life, mind also has in the same way grown into an undivine power and has reached the very summit of it. So also has matter to a still greater extent. And all of them are being used by the dark Forces for strengthening their domination over humanity. Man, duped by the richness of material possessions that he has acquired with the help of these demoniac powers, has readily played into their hands and as their instruments gives them his co-operation so that more treasures may come to him and more happiness, little knowing that along with them will inevitably

come more slavery and more losing in his soul. This is indeed a very dismal scene in the human drama. The sorrows of man seem to be at their worst in spite of his being the enjoyer of almost every kind of material prosperity. But he cannot remain forever a victim of these Forces. There is a higher destiny for him, a greater perfectability, and to realise that is the true purpose of his life. A child of Light, he has the power inherent in him, the power of the Shakti, by which to baffle the sons of Night. If however he finds himself unable to evoke that power in him he must seek the Guidance which will do that for him because it is there on earth today in order to lead mankind in its evolutionary ascent. Whatever the impediments, they have to be overcome, since it is the law of Nature that evolution must proceed realising itself progressively till its ultimate goal is reached. It cannot stop, neither can it take a wrong course.

The signs are clear that in his evolution man has arrived at a stage in which he seems to have attained the highest point of his mental possibility. And the vast successes that he has achieved by his mental and vital powers are beginning to prove too heavy for him, and their deadening weight is about to kill his soul. Man has also started to feel however vaguely that an exclusive reliance on the creations of his ego-ridden mind has instead of helping him to solve his problems rendered them more complex. This feeling will possibly bring about his disillusionment when he will feel within him the urge to seek after the true truth of his life and the deeper significance of Nature's intention in it. The time is propitious today and the conditions in life and nature are not only favourable to, but are pressing for, the emergence in the vision of man of that great truth and also of the 'sunlit Path' that will lead him to its realisation. This will be the dawn of a new life for man whose birth is signalised by the travail through which humanity is at present passing. Forces of darkness and evil are rampant everywhere. Falsehood reigns supreme. Death is abroad. All showing the condition of things which, according to the asser-

tion of the mystics and prophets, must precede the Manifestation and is even a sign of its approach. Wherein then is the secret? Where is the Light? The secret has begun to be revealed to those who have heard the Call. And the Light has been seen. And the strength has also come. The darkness will pass away, and the Sun of Truth will burst into the magnificence of a heavenly dawn on earth. A higher than mental life for man is in promise; and that is the only way out of the evils which afflict humanity. A new Light from above is therefore descending into the earth by which will be effected the above change in the nature of man as also in his consciousness, a change that will take place as the next inevitable stage in the evolutionary process of Nature. It is the pressure of this Light that has driven the forces of evil to invade the earth in all their riotous orgy. But their fall is certain, because the Light is decreed to come down and manifest in the earth lifting man beyond himself into a higher being. Man must therefore be ready for this transformation. He must turn inwards, live within and live in his spirit. He must aspire for the Grace of the Mother, the Divine Shakti, who, in one of her aspects, is the evolutionary Force herself and who only, and not any human *tapasya*, can liberate man from the clutches of the asuric powers, and by releasing the godlike elements in him, so long veiled by Ignorance, will mould him into an expression of the Divine. The Leaders of the Way are here on earth. Seers of the Supreme Truth, discoverers of the Light, they unfold before man the splendours of a new and higher life into which he is going to be born. Bearers of a world's burden, its greatest saviours, they, themselves representing it, intensify the ascending urge in man, and in their divine way, are preparing him so that he may recognise and receive the Light when it comes and be illumined into that higher consciousness in which he will find the perfection of his whole being.

II

But this seems to be an ideal for the individual. What about the community? How can peace and happiness perma-

nently reign in earth if the collectivity also is not so perfected ? —may ask the pragmatic mind. A great idea or ideal reveals itself first to an individual who is held to be its seer. It then draws its adherents by its own force but also through the readiness of the members of the community to individually recognise and accept it. An age of remarkable human achievement is always an age in which the creative individuals live and work, each in his own world, absorbed in pursuit of what to them is true, good or beautiful ; and the fruits of their labours are woven into the texture of the culture or civilisation that goes by the name of the people or country to which the individuals belong. In the cycle of progress an Age of Individualism is to be the precursor of an Age of Subjectivism ; not only that, the latter in its seed exists in the former and may show there some of its sproutings, because when in his creative efforts the individual man begins to sound the depths of his being in order to discover his inner potentialities for making his creations more perfect as well as for undertaking new ventures, he catches glimpses of things of which he was unaware before, the things which give him intimation of profounder truths about his own soul, the spirit within him, his higher self, and he begins to look beyond and look longer and to open into the reality behind every appearance. That the present is the beginning of an Age of Subjectivism is evident from the fact that the intensive period of cultural achievements through which humanity has passed in its recent history and is still passing has brought home to its leaders of thought the fact that without an utter going within, an inward quest, true knowledge is impossible. The character of the age becomes yet clearer in that it envisages the above ideal of human perfection which is to come through, among other things, an inner change in the nature of man. But this ideal is something greater than any that has ever come to the vision of man. It is an eternal Truth and is the discovery or rather the mastery of the power by which others may be helped towards its realisation. An idea spreads mainly through propagation. But a truth, seen by a seer, works its way silently into the consciousness of man,

and even when external method is adopted for its dissemination, its acceptance by others will depend not only on its own dynamic profundity but also, and in a large measure, on the inner fitness of those who will receive it and on their capacity to assimilate it to their own being. It is this preparedness on the part of man which, as we have said, is the condition of the ideal of a perfected life being within the orbit of reality, though there are reasons to believe that once an ideal is there it is sure to actualise itself in the life of the race sooner or later, and more so with regard to this particular ideal whose fulfilment is an event decreed in the conditions of earth-nature. If that is so it cannot indeed be an ideal for the individual or the group. The collectivity will be the natural formation into which the perfected beings everywhere will grow. It will be founded on a new social consciousness which will be luminous with a constant sense of the essential spiritual oneness of the individuals, and will replace all parochial concepts and patterns of the present mental man, and initiate the nucleus of a new order that will come into being as a result of man's opening to the Light of which harmony and unity are fundamental principles.

This future possibility may have its beginnings, however inchoate, in the efforts that are being made today to find out ways and means by which mankind may be united into an intimate sense of mutuality so that peace and amity may be permanently established in a world torn to pieces by the separatistic propensities of its self-assertive and power-seeking groups and communities. But as the ideal does not seem to be very much clear in the horizon of human thought, much importance is yet being given to institutions and machinery for achieving it in the collective life of man which has become too much complex for its problems, far less, we may repeat, the problem of unity, to be solved by any mechanical means. Nevertheless, the only saving perception lies in the fact that man has begun to realise the need of unity and in almost every plan that is being drawn up for the social and political reconstruction in the post-War world much consideration is being given to this

vital problem without whose solution, it has begun to be felt, no plan can be worked out with even a modicum of success. Unity therefore is another ideal which forces of division and discord working through war are emphasising to man as an imperative necessity for the collective well-being of the race. Apart from its importance in the external life, in the new order of the future it will be one of its guiding principles, a basic element, giving to it all the power of its cohesion, and there it will exist as the spontaneous expression of the higher forces that will sustain its spiritual living ; for, one of the forces will be that of the inner oneness of all existence, and a life in the spirit will characterise the inward and outward movements both of its individual and collective being.

Unity however is not a recent ideal. It may not have existed before in its present concept ; but there is little doubt that from very early times an impulse towards it as an element in the very make-up of man's being started to express itself, and notwithstanding the opposition of his lower nature to its growth in him it has always been there, though mostly veiled by his separative ego. Its surge in his heart at critical periods of his history has motivated many of his noble endeavours including those that he has made towards the building up and strengthening of his corporate existence in which a very great part has been played by its physical factor, the *Place*. It is said that herd-instinct in the primitive man was the beginning of his social consciousness, and that geographical and other physical conditions helped its growth till the idea of land favourable for settled living came into his mind. But behind the herd-instinct lies the life-urge towards self-gravitation, and yet behind it is the sublime Vedantic truth of One in All and All in One which enshrines the highest conception of unity and which is the motivating force behind every movement in the universe through which everything tends to fulfil itself in its wholeness. In man this tendency takes a subjective turn as the re-discovery that in his soul, that divine spark in him, he is one with others in whom the same fire flames and that all live in God. Unity as such

is also an ideal for the individual, and before the collective humanity is able to manifest it, the individual must realise its truth in his personal life and that through not merely a fellow-feeling with all men,—that is a fragile bond,—but a dominant sense of oneness, born of a large universal consciousness, in which he will regard others as parts of himself.

That unity will exist in the future world-order as by its very law is indicated by Nature herself in having it as one of the aims of her evolutionary endeavour ; but in her process to bring it about she wants a closer cohesion among the different corporate members of the body-politic of humanity. She therefore holds before them the ideal waiting for the hour when they will awaken to it and strive for its realisation. Unhappily for man the hour for any peaceful effort to achieve it according to the spiritual law of his being has scarcely come in his collective life, compelling Nature to resort to her violent method. If from the very beginning land was a potent factor in all human unifications, almost co-eval with it was war a no less force in forging it among various parts and fragments of humanity. Conflict with others or fear of attack from outside led the primitive clans and tribes to organise themselves into stronger and larger groups which through a similar process, aided by other natural and artificial means, and above all by their growing communal ego and communal consciousness, developed into yet larger and more powerful collectivities, the factor of land all the time playing its role as a determining, welding and shaping influence, till there emerged the full-fledged nations and States of today. But the result has been a regional unity and that also based on the life instincts of man that make him self-centred and encourage an excessive aggrandisement of his egoistic impulses which in the case of a nation has proved more dangerous in that when it is stronger it seeks to extend its frontiers aggressively over its neighbours, and when weaker, its sole concern is to protect them against such aggression. Nationalism acclaims itself as a virtue ; and militarism, as the *dharma* of the strong. And an insatiable lust for domination

and supremacy is being entertained through so many subtle ways ; and all these tending towards a condition of things which is nothing but war, and when it is not there in its ghastly reality, an armed peace which is no better than war takes its place. War, which through the ages has helped forward the formation of human collectivities, has today developed into a terrible menace to their very existence. The very intensity of the struggle and disorder in the international life of humanity indicates that Nature does not want the existing order of things to continue for any length of time. If the human groups, whatever their forms, go on behaving as so many warring factions, each indulging in the worst of passions in order to assert its mastery over the other, if the monster of militarism is continuously fed by an upsurge of greed, of gold-hunger, earth-hunger and commodity-hunger, and what is more, by an open revolt against the Divine, by which only the help of the Asuras can be secured in the effort to appease these inordinate vital cravings (as is so unfortunately happening in a country in Europe today) then it would seem that humanity is heading for yet more catastrophic disasters and through them ultimately for its complete annihilation or for a recrudescence of its barbaric existence. But that is not to be. If darkness prevails everywhere, and the Night, they are only the prelude to the coming Dawn. If the world is shaken by an uprush of hostile forces it is because they are making their last desperate attempt to resist the Manifestation, the descent of a New Light into the earth which would mean the destruction of their empire on humanity. The upheaval that is raging in the world today is one of Nature's ways through which the powers of evil will exhaust themselves, and man will be moved into thinking in terms of his collective good in a common harmonious order of things in which mutual toleration and union will be the law, in which many elements, racial, national, cultural, spiritual will exist side by side and form a multiple unity. One of the reasons why the above idea is very likely to realise itself in the future is the fact that it has already begun to be felt that unless a better system of organisation for

the management and guidance of all human affairs is thought out and put into practice, the collective existence of man will never be able to get over the forces that precipitate its disintegration. The utmost that man with the power of his mind has so far been able to do in that direction is to formulate new and less faulty methods for the re-orientation of his corporate living, of which a remarkable result is the growth of an international outlook that became more prominent in the mental horizon of man and whose necessity was felt more than ever before, after the termination of the last Great War which was largely responsible for its accentuation. Science has widened the sphere of man's creative activity. It has annihilated distance, and by providing immense facilities of social and cultural intercourse, has brought about uniform changes in the common life of humanity so much so that a world stand-point has begun to be a characteristic feature in almost every form of man's endeavour towards self-expression. The other ideal defining itself in several patterns of its externalisation is that of a world-State, and any one of them might possibly arrive at a fruition as the culmination of the tendencies in the modern mind towards an international unification, and under the pressure of the circumstances which is increasing daily. The different forms in which world-State has so far been conceived have each of them their justification and their effectivities too in providing sufficient scope for the free play of life and the healthy progress of the race. But the defects inherent in them cannot be overlooked, and they are more important to our discussion since our object is to find out the means by which permanent peace and unity might be established on earth. "A centralised world-State would signify the triumph of the idea of mechanical unity or rather uniformity. It would inevitably mean the undue depression of an indispensable element in the vigour of human life and progress, the free life of the individual, the free variation of the peoples. It must end, if it becomes permanent and fulfils all its tendencies, either in a death in life, a stagnation or by the insurgence of some new saving but revolutionary force

or principle which would shatter the whole fabric into pieces. A centralised socialistic State may be a necessity of the future, but a reaction from it is equally a necessity ; the greater its pressure, the more certainly will it be met by the spread of the spiritual, the intellectual, the vital and practical principle of Anarchism in revolt against the mechanical pressure. Again a federal system will tend inevitably to establish one general type for human life, institutions and activities and allow only a play of minor variations ; but with that the need of variation in living Nature could not always rest satisfied. On the other hand, a looser confederacy might well be open to the objection that it would give too ready a handle for centrifugal forces, were such to arise in new strength, and that it could not be permanent, but must turn after all in one direction or the other and end either in a centralisation or a break-up of unity." Besides these proposed forms of world-government for the future, many plans, projects and charters are already there to serve the purpose of a so-called rational formula for the re-making of the world into a common community-life broad-based on the principles of freedom, equality and unity. But where is freedom in the world today ? It is true that man's longing for a condition of independence in every sphere of his life has behind it, however unconscious of it he might himself be, that secret urge of his soul which is always seeking to be liberated into its native status from where only it can fulfil itself in his individual and collective life ; but it is also true that every effort that he makes towards his release from bondage in his inner or outer life is repelled by the predominance in him of the insistent demands of his assertive ego. The repercussion of this in his collective life is that in his attempt to secure his freedom through, among other things, machinery, science and State, he forges his own shackles that bind him into an utter slavery to these creations of his ego-centric mind. And whatever of political freedom can possibly exist even under such unfavourable conditions does not seem to have fallen to the lot of every country in the world on account of various ulterior motives being persistently enter-

tained by the powers-that-be. So has equality for the same reason proved to be far from even a semblance of reality in the collective existence of mankind. The idea of giving a shape to this principle through an equal association and sharing in the labour and common profits of the corporate life does not show much promise of being a permanent success. The unavoidable evils of centralised authority are already there undoing whatever it has achieved so far. And unity is being negated by the self-aggrandising activities of power-intoxicated peoples which only widen their differences and aggravate distrusts and antipathies that burst into such staggering conflicts as we are witnessing before our eyes today. It is idle to expect that any organisation for bringing about lasting peace and equilibrium in the international life of humanity can be built on a state of affairs envisaged above. The evils seem to be too deep-rooted to be removed by any mechanical imposition from outside. Human nature, we may repeat, remains ever confined within the groove of its inherent imperfections, and reason has yet to be a governing force in the life of every individual ; and even if it were so it could not be trusted because of the fact that mind of which reason is a power is itself an imperfect and dividing principle guided by ego and limited by its present status in Ignorance so that it cannot have a total view of things in their proper perspective, far less be the creator of anything that may be called perfect. Any planning for the future which ignores these facts and does not take into account the past experiences of the race has very little chance of success. And it would also err grievously if it does not recognise the truth in all its deeper implications that any change to be permanently effective even in the external life of man must come from within, that nothing can be real in life which is not made real in the spirit. Freedom, equality and unity are absolute concepts whose exterior patterns would carry no meaning or value if they do not grow out of a direct realisation of their interior profundities in the soul. "They are in fact the nature of the soul. When the soul claims freedom, it is the freedom of its self-development, the self-

development of the divine in man in all his being ; when it claims equality, what it is claiming is that freedom equally for all and the recognition of the same soul, the same godhead in all human beings ; and when it strives for brotherhood, it is founding that equal freedom of self-development on a common aim, a common life, a unity of mind and feeling founded upon the recognition of this inner spiritual Unity."

"A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future. By this we do not mean what is ordinarily called a universal religion, a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief. Mankind has tried unity by that means ; it has failed and deserved to fail, because there can be no universal religious system. The inner spirit is indeed one, but more than any other the spiritual life insists on freedom and variation in its self-expression and means of development. What is meant, is the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine reality, in which we are all one and of which humanity is the highest vehicle on earth and that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself there, with a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this divine Spirit upon earth. It means that oneness with our fellow-men will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of co-operation, but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality ; the realisation by the individual that only in the life of his fellow-men is his own life complete, the realisation by the race that only on the free and the full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded ; a way of salvation in accordance with this religion, that is to say, a means by which it can be developed by each man within himself so that it may be developed in the life of the race."

The development of a soul-life in the individual and there-through in the collectivity is therefore the only path. Nothing else can achieve the object. Man must change in his heart and nature and learn to turn his eyes inward and live from within outward, and perfect him and his community out of his growing

inner perfection. If the kingdom of God is to come, man must keep himself ready for it first by knowing God and then by seeing and living the diviner truth of his being in himself as well as in others. This inward change in him cannot be brought about by any external means. He must grow into it as one of the possibilities of his own higher nature. What that higher nature is should also be his concern to find out by a going within into the depths of his being. But has not mankind, at least those who have had glimpses of their higher destiny, striven for it with all the intensity of their soul from almost the very beginning of its history? why is it then that mankind still remains unchanged in its nature and unenlightened in its consciousness?—may be asked by the seeking intellect. In her evolutionary process Nature rejects nothing; even the fruits of what would outwardly seem to be failures have their place in it no less important than many of her successes, all of which she assimilates to the being of the earth-life which is thereby made richer and fuller in its experience so necessary for its growth into a higher status of existence. The past achievements of the race in every sphere of its creative activity not only exist in it but have immensely helped to build what the earth is today as the field of a greater Manifestation. Herein lies the secret of the truth, so long hidden from mankind, that the call to turn inward is sent forth to man at this hour because a greater era in his living is in promise and what in his struggle for a higher life he has not so far been able to achieve is going to be his now, since the time is coming for a New Light, a new truth, to descend into his consciousness and transform it into its luminous nature. The change in his nature and consciousness did not take place so long because man was not ready, neither were the conditions in earth-nature in which mind, the most powerful of the principles so far developed in it in its evolutionary ascent, did not reach the summit of its possibility. It has been already pointed out that mind seems to have arrived now at the highest point of its earthly power, and conditions in the earth appear also to be favourable for a higher principle than the mind to

come down and realise itself in the terrestrial evolution. It is this Power, a conscious and creative Power of God, which is coming down into the earth for changing it and giving it the shape and expression of a divine perfection. It will quicken into activity its own principle involved in the earth-nature and evolve a higher being in the same way as man the mental being was evolved out of its previous animal stage through the impact from above of Mind on its own principle involved in the earth. The dawn of this Power on earth, a Power greater than any that has ever been active here, would bring about the renewal of the earth's destiny through the birth of a new world, a new life, a new society and a new civilisation. Man has begun to feel discontented with the condition of things in which he lives today. He is gradually opening to the truth that his present life is a blind groping in the darkness of ignorance. The possibility of a higher life is slowly entering his thoughts. These clearly are the signs of the beginning of an Age of Subjectivism in which the vision of man would widen into newer and profounder revealments of which the most important to him will be the discovery that there is in him a higher nature, a greater perfectability towards which, impelled by the heavenward urge in him, he has been marching from the very early days of his history through every one of his spiritual adventure, the fruits of which, even the failures, have prepared the path for him leading to that destination. That 'divine event' is going to happen in his life: the end of his human journey is in sight. For, is not the Light on the way of its descent into the earth? And have not the Liberators come? and their Call? and the Promise?

The gods in their world have everything in abundance. They have immortal life, immortal ananda; but one thing they have not: it is the power to grow, the power to increase, the absence of which deprives them of the fulness of a greater perfection, leaving them in their world fixed, each of them, to particular typical forms of the infinite truth of their Supreme Father. Perfect in the sense that it represents some aspect of the Infinite

but complete and satisfied in itself, the world of the gods knows no evolution and, therefore, no aspiration for self-exceeding of any kind. Whereas earth has the Divine concealed in it and is therefore compelled to strive for growth towards that Light, for conquering the opposition that veils it, and for the attainment, by going beyond itself, of greater and greater perfection through the never-ending process of evolution. Growth and evolution has in this way come to be the law of terrestrial existence ; and in man it has found the acme of its fulfilment so far possible under the existing order of things. But the evolutionary Force does not stop at man. She has yet higher beings to evolve in her continuous process. The gods therefore take their birth in man in order to be released from the limitation imposed on them by their incapacity to grow. Each man represents a godhead, a power of God, and that is his higher nature, and to grow into that, his destiny. It is this godhead in man which enshrines his true individual entity, the divine essence of his personality. The biological idea that like the two leaves of a tree no two human individuals are alike has its inner significance implicit in the fact that in the tree of humanity every individual human is an aspect, a power of God who is infinite in his powers and aspects. Every individual is thus an independent divine entity but each is one with all in God in the same way as the leaves of a tree are parts of it, are in the very tree itself. The modern theory that individuality is the kernel of democracy faintly echoes the deeper truth that humanity will be able to attain the pinnacle of his spiritual possibility when every individual in it will have freedom enough to develop the potentialities latent in him, which would ultimately mean the manifestation of its divinity within. But the godhead in man sleeps waiting for the Mother to rouse it in a perfected human vehicle. Its occasional awakenings in illumined souls are responsible for the most brilliant periods in human history when all that is great and glorious has been created. "The history of the cycles of man is a progress towards the unveiling of the Godhead in the soul and life of humanity ; each high event and stage of it is a

divine manifestation." But Avatarhood is not meant to end with a Krishna, a Buddha, or a Christ. It indicates the possibility of the descent of the Divine into man, and that of man to ascend into the height of a divine perfection. So the godhead must rise forever and be fully established in the consciousness of man, since that is the immediate and inevitable end in his evolution and also the fulfilment the godhead itself is seeking. It sleeps in the being of man because of the outward trend of his present life in Ignorance which is expressed in his craving for the satisfaction of his vital demands. In religion this tendency takes the form of propitiating the forces which are the lower formations of the gods for more power, more wealth and more of those sordid things of life which tempt him away from his spiritual leanings. Man worships an image of the godhead in the temple without, as the fruit of it is so easy and so immediate to get and it is indispensable for his earthly success: but his real god lies within him unknown, looking forward to that momentous hour of its emergence in the consciousness of man which will be heralded by the Divine Mother when she will deliver the gods from their typal and unprogressive world, and when the children of the earth will aspire for her Grace to tear asunder the veil of Ignorance and awaken them to their divinity within.

And as the gods propitiate their Mother she condescends to liberate them into the progressive dynamic of an evolutionary existence on earth; and as the children of the earth aspire to the Divine Mother with all the depth and intensity of their soul giving themselves to her wholly and entirely, she in her Infinite Grace takes up the human vessel and perfects it purging it of all its turbid contents so as to initiate therein the double movement of the ascent or awakening of the human souls to their respective godheads and of the descent or birth of the godheads in their respective human vehicles. But the movement will commence and the gods will so manifest in man only when that new Light from heaven will come down into the earth: and then this unhappy and imperfect world of man, so long subjected to obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering, will begin to

be transformed by the Divine Mother,—for she is the creative Force of that Light,—into a happy and perfect Kingdom of the Gods where will prevail as by its very law Truth and Light and Life divine and immortal's Ananda, fulfilling thereby the Promise that

“A NEW LIGHT SHALL BREAK UPON THE EARTH,
A NEW WORLD SHALL BE BORN,
AND THE THINGS THAT WERE ANNOUNCED
SHALL BE FULFILLED.”*

SISIR KUMAR MITRA

* Based on Sri Aurobindo's writings including letters to his disciples and the following books and articles :—*The Life Divine*, *The Mother*, *War and Self-Determination*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Psychology of Social Development*, *The Secret of the Veda*, *A Defence of Indian Culture*, (the last four are titles of series of articles published in the *Arya*, now defunct). The quotations are from the above books, excepting the last one which is from *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*.

Srī Aurobindo and the Veda

It was casually that Sri Aurobindo looked into the Veda to see what warrant there was for certain present-day ethnical theories as regards the Aryan-Dravidian classification of races ; of real warrant there was none to be found ; but he discovered a world of the highest spiritual splendour, perhaps only once equalled, and then focussed into a more perfect luminosity, in the long milleniums of man's history. It is a world unique in its spiritual effort and achievement ; unique in the external forms it gave to its aspiration and adoration ; unique too, and almost alien to us, in its modes of thought and sometimes even of feeling and in its modes of expression. Himself, he was living inwardly in a kindred world of spiritual effort and aspiration and so he was able to enter into the heart of the Vedic Rishis and their sacred mysteries. And now because of him, we are able to enter into that glorious world of ancient knowledge wherein illumined seers forge the human into the god-like birth in the divine smithy of the Yajna¹ ; wherein they invoke through chants of compelling power Agni the Divine Will and Indra the Divine Mind and various other powers and personalities of the One Existent for the riches of the Spirit ; wherein they yoke their mind and thoughts to the Vast Luminous Intelligence of the Sun of the Divine Truth for the attainment of the immortal Light.²

We are all acquainted with the current traditional account of the Veda. It is revelation of eternal and impersonal Truth, but of the complete revelation it forms the preliminary section,

¹Ayo na .. janimā dhamantaḥ : 'As if iron, forging the birth' 4—2—17. (References when not otherwise stated are to the Rigveda).

²Yuñjate mana uta yuñjate dhiyo viprā viprasya bṛhato vipascitaḥ— Illumined seers yoke their mind and thoughts to the Illumined Seer, He of the vast luminous knowledge. 5—81—1.

the book of Works, of sacrificial rites revealed to the Vedic seers, whose faultless performance bestows upon the doer all kinds of prosperity here on earth and beyond in the realms of the gods. The crown and culmination of the Veda is the Vedanta or the Upanishads, which are the book of Knowledge—Knowledge that opens to man his highest good. The Veda is for those who are driven by desire, who seek after enjoyment, who are content to swim in the unceasing currents of Nature, to rise and fall with its restless waves. But for those who would give up all desire and would turn away from the chase of worldly or heavenly pleasures, who would rise above the flux of Nature to the immutable truth of Being, for them is the Vedanta. But the sacrificial works of the Veda can be a step in the attaining of the true knowledge, for performed without desire for their fruits they purify the doer and he becomes a fit vessel for the knowledge. This is the traditional opinion on the Veda which had got slowly crystallised and ultimately prevailed, but there must have been, and we know that there were, other trends of opinion in the long course of India's cultural history. This view has been neatly and forcefully summarised for us in a few verses of the Gita, though with special regard to fanatics of Vedic ritualism and from that time onward it has held the field.

But there is a very ancient world-view which forms a permanent strand of all traditional views on the Veda, to which we must pay special attention if we would understand them aright. According to that world-view this scheme of things that we behold has, both as a whole and in its elements and principles, three aspects,—the physical or the *ādhi-bhautika*, the cosmic divine or the *ādhi-daivika* and the spiritual or the *ādhyātmika*. Thus the Vedic Rishis approached and adored the gods in these three aspects, though it may be that it is their sacrificial forms and personalities closely connected with their cosmic divine aspect that they placed in the forefront. Agni, the foremost god in the Vedic scheme of worship, officiant at the sacrifice, bearer of man's oblations to the gods, conveyer of the gods to man, is Fire in his physical or nature aspect ; but the presiding

deity of Fire is a Creative Principle in things that is incessantly at work burning away the old and building up the new ; and in his spiritual aspect he is the Divine in the soul of man and in the soul of the Universe and in the Beyond. All gods have likewise these three aspects and it depends upon the capacity of the worshipper whether he stops short of this sacrificial form and personality or, through them as a vestibule, penetrates into their inner and innermost reality. "The sacrificial aspect is the flower and the cosmic divine aspect is the fruit ; or the cosmic divine aspect is the flower and the spiritual aspect is the fruit", says Yaska.¹ Still it is recognised by tradition, that in the Veda it is the sacrificial or the *adhi-yajña* forms and personalities of the gods that are of prime concern and importance. It is on the basis of this idea that Sayana has written his monumental commentary on the Rigvedic hymns.

The question for us is, have we got at the real sense and intention of this most ancient scripture of the world? Sayana's commentary is an amazing achievement, considering the difficulties of the times in which it was written and the special competence in many a recondite field of learning that it required. It would be superfluous to mention the thoroughness of its scholarship. It gives, for the language of the hymns, all relevant information as regards grammar and etymology and, for their substance, it brings together, wherever necessary, from the whole of extant Vedic Literature and Tradition, all supposed references to ritual practice and myth and legend. It is thus an indispensable aid to the understanding of the Veda. But unfortunately our praise of Sayana has to stop with this acknowledgment. As to entering into the meaning of the Riks and making explicit the subtle relations of idea to idea and the steps and transitions in the movement of the thought, he is often a thorough disappointment. He frequently destroys the poetical character of his text, even when it is there plainly on the surface and he seems to do it on a system. When in an impressive line

¹Yājñā daivate puṣpaphale devatādhyātme vā. Nirukta 1—6—4.

communicating a fine glow of feeling through striking and truthful imagery a Rishi sings:

*Vastreṇeva vāsayā manmanā śucim jyotīratham śukravarnam
tamohanam*¹,

“As if with a garment envelop him with thy thought, the Pure One, He who moves forth in his chariot of Light and whose hue is a flaming whiteness,—Slayer of the Darkness”,

Sayana begins one of his renderings thus:

“Cover the sacrificial Fire with a chip of wood soft as a piece of cloth (*vastreṇeva*) and attractive to the mind or heart (*manmanā* taken adjectivally)”.

This is only a strong illustration of Sayana's method of interpretation based on the view that the hymns are in their intention and purpose entirely ritualistic, even though in a few passages it may be possible to read a spiritual significance.

Western scholars entered into the field of Vedic interpretation about a century ago and have kept on labouring steadily at it. They brought their fresh minds to the Vedic studies and also fresh knowledge which the old Indian scholars did not have at their disposal,—the knowledge of so many new sciences, especially of comparative Philology, comparative Mythology and Religion. They brought also their knowledge of the Avesta, a sister scripture to the Rigveda. No praise can be too great for their disinterested pursuit of knowledge and their conscientious labours call forth our heart's gratitude in an abundant measure. But what, in the result, is their account of the Veda?

They find in it an extremely interesting picture of the mind of humanity in its childhood. Powers and phenomena of Nature are personified, deified and worshipped through magical rites for the sake of food and rain, cows and horses, sons and servants, long life, triumph over enemies, and wealth of all kinds. Fire and Air—Agni and Vayu; storm winds and the mysterious Power that bursts open the clouds with the lightning-shaft and makes them rain—Maruts and Indra; the Dawn and the Sun—

¹ 1-140-1.

Ushas and Surya ; the Lords of the Day and the Night—Mitra and Varuna—such and such-like are the gods of the Vedic worshipper. It happened that each of these gods in his turn for worship was being raised to the rank of supremacy and also one god was being identified with another for lack of any very distinctive features amongst themselves. There was thus a sort of perplexed tendency towards mono-theism, which civilised religions of other countries reached through gradual evolution. But a peculiarly Indian development, we are made to understand, seems to have intervened with the identification of Aditi, mother of the gods, with the whole of Nature and we have as a result the pantheism of the Vedanta. The Vedic religion itself occupies a position somewhere between primitive anthropomorphism and the polytheism of the Greek and Roman mythologies.

What may be called the nature aspect of the Vedic gods was no new thing to Indian tradition. "Who is Vritra?" asks Yaska¹ and answers, "The Nairuktas say it is the cloud and the Aitihasikas that he is an Asura, son of Twashtri". And he goes on to say that the battle between Indra and Vritra is only a figurative description of the intermingling of the two elements Water and Light, from which action rain is produced. And to the western scholars Vritra is either the nightly darkness destroyed by Indra the sun in his daily rising on the eastern horizon, or he is the primeval darkness of chaos victoriously conquered on the first morning of creation, or he is the demon of drought or even of eclipse, or, represented by that asterism of the zodiac in which the sun loses his strength, he stands for the forces of winter adverse to life. The traditional interpreters regarded the Nature aspect of the gods as the outer and part expression of their divine personalities. They did not speculate on the problem as to how man came to conceive them. But to the western scholars and those who follow in their wake the Veda is interesting as revealing the very birth of the gods, as

¹ Nirukta 2—5—2.

showing how early man created them from the powers and phenomena of Nature.

In spite of radical difference in general outlook and wide divergence in the manner of looking at the attributes and functions of the gods, both the old and the new interpreters of the Veda have, on the whole, reduced it to a mass of sun and star and weather myths, with a sprinkling of prehistoric legends, couched in mystifying enigma and allegory and woven into an elaborate pattern of ritualistic worship. In one case the obsessions of a latter-day ritualistic theology and in the other the preconceived notions of a superficially-scientific view of the evolution of man's mind and thought have worked havoc with the real sense of the Veda. We may accept that man derived his notions of the divine from the manifestation of nature's power; that physical fire, for instance, may have so impressed him as to become an object and vehicle of his worship and a gateway to the Divine. But the anthropomorphic theory of religion and the magical theory of rites seem to be based on a very incomplete and superficial view of the psychology of early man. And even if we are disposed to accept these theories and apply them to account for the creation of the Vedic gods and rites by the primitive forefathers of the Aryans, in the Rig Veda itself that stage has been long past and left far behind. Here surely are no primitive people whom we can picture on the model of aboriginal tribes visited and described by anthropologists and explorers of the last three or four hundred years, but a hieratic line of thinkers and seers—*dhīrāḥ*, *viprāḥ*, *ṛṣayaḥ*—who are in charge of a sacred tradition of the mystical sacrifice and are intent upon keeping it alive and handing it down to future generations¹ and “who, in the light of the heart's perceptions, range along the thousand-branched mystery of existence”—*ta in niṇyam hṛdayasya praketaiḥ sahasraśaṁ abhi sancaranti* (7—33—9).

¹ *mā chedma raśmīn iti nādhāmānāḥ pitṛṇām śaktir anuyacchamānāḥ*—“May we not break the threads”—thus in their hearts desiring and extending the knowledge-powers of the fathers. 1—109—3.

Most of us have heard the Vedic story of Sunahsepa who was sold away by his parents to serve as a human victim in a king's sacrifice, who was bound with three cords in three places of his body to the sacrificial post ready to be immolated, who in this last extremity turned to the gods and prayed to them and they delivered him. We refer to Sunahsepa's hymn in the Rig Veda which is said to allude to this story and what is it that we find? There is no actual sacrificial post and no material cords with which the victim is secured to it. The hymn is a magnificent chant to the gods of a soul thirsting for release into the boundlessness of Aditi, mother of the gods and the worlds. "Bound in three places of the 'Tree'¹—the Tree of Life—with three bonds, higher, lower and middle, Sunahsepa calls upon Varuna for deliverance from them, "so that, O son of Aditi", he cries, "blameless in thy law we may pertain to Aditi" (1—24 15). It is plain the bonds are symbolic and they seem to be no other than the limitations imposed upon the soul by the body, life and mind. "Of whom now the name, the lovely name of which one among the immortals, shall we think upon? Who will deliver me back to great Aditi that I may see the Father and the Mother?"—so begins this eternal cry of the soul in lines whose rhythm seems to capture something of the swell of shoreless oceans. And Sunahsepa addresses Agni, Savita, Bhaga and other gods in turn and finally Varuna, Lord of the unconfined Vast, who it is that releases the soul into the infinitude of Aditi. And this is the constant theme of the Veda. But Sayana gives no inkling of this and he finds in the hymn the matter-of-fact story of a human victim tied to the sacrificial post and who obtains his freedom through marvellous divine intervention. For Sayana has very definite views on the intention and purpose of the Veda, which is only to reveal ritual works.

How is it that the Veda has been able to guard its secret inviolate for so long, is a question that naturally occurs to the

¹ or of the wood, in which case it may be taken to mean a sacrificial post made of wood.

mind. The Rig Veda, as we have it, is a subsequent compilation of hymns that had been composed throughout an epoch of intense spiritual and religious culture extending over a good number of generations. There is nothing before the Veda to throw its light upon it, and between it and the earliest attempts at its interpretation in the Brahmanas there lies a wide and very deep gap in tradition. Already in the Brahmanas they are guessing and speculating about the meaning of the hymns, trying out various interpretations, suggesting fanciful and fictitious etymologies, sometimes in sheer good faith and sometimes with the deliberate intention of grafting new significances into the text. That the Vedic tradition was almost entirely lost is a conclusion forced upon us by much evidence; but as to how it was lost, whether it was due to Nature's cataclysms or to sometimes more fierce and destructive social convulsions or to both, we can only speculate. There are stories, too, coming from old, old times of the loss of the Veda and its recovery by a divine Incarnation. And Yaska, later on, puts in the mouth of an opponent, invented or real, seriously the contention that the Veda has no intelligible meaning.

Still, however serious this gap in tradition, the thinkers of the Vedic Renaissance in the Brahmana and Aranyaka period, we feel, should not have been prevented by it in successfully recovering the culture and knowledge of the Vedic Age. In fact we have in the Upanishads luminous hints as to the true nature of the Vedic sacrifice and the Vedic gods. But the difficulties that baffle attempts to arrive at the real sense of the Veda are peculiar to the Veda. Its garb of archaic Sanskrit is not very difficult to unloose. The chief difficulty is its deliberately symbolic diction in which the true, inner sense is hidden under the veil of an external sense and also its unique mode of thinking in concrete images, for which our modern way of thinking would substitute its counters of abstract ideas.

Very often the language of the Veda is recognisably allegorical; for instance, when Vamadeva speaks of "the four-horned Bull with its three feet, two heads and seven hands, which

triply tethered roars aloud—the great god who has entered into mortals”,¹ there is no doubt that there is a hidden meaning in this freak of imagination, no doubt that, whatever might be our precise manner of unriddling these strange features of the Bull,² it stands in a general way for the divine power which has entered into the world and activates it. But when Madhucchandas says that the rapture of Indra is indeed cow-giving—“*go-dā id revato madaḥ*”—one is apt to take it as a plain statement of fact, that the Rishi believed that the offering of the Soma-wine in the sacrifice exhilarated Indra to the point of expelling all stinginess from him and that somehow he then saw to it that cows accrued to the sacrificer. This may have been the idea of the ordinary worshipper even in the Vedic times ; but to those who entered into the heart of the Vedic worship it conveyed a different meaning altogether. To them the gift of Indra was the gift of Light, of the inner Light that illumines the mind. The image of the physical cow was merely a symbol for the inner Light. And moreover the word ‘*gau*’ conveyed the sense of light also as one of its various meanings. In the particular stage of language development which we observe in the Veda the word meant both cow and light, suggested to the mind both senses with equal readiness and naturalness. This may appear to us to be no more than an instance of the rhetorical figure of ‘Slesha’ or double entendre with which we are so familiar in classical Sanskrit, but there is a great difference. However easily classical Sanskrit may lend itself to the use of this figure, it is always by an artificial device of style that a word is made to yield more than one meaning. But Vedic Sanskrit appears to preserve something of the original character of language when words have not yet been rigidly fixed into conventional signs denoting a unique and precisely marked-

¹ Catvāri śṛṅgā trayo asya pādā dve śīrṣe sapta hastāso asya, tridhā baddho vṛṣabho roravīti maho devo martyān āviveśa. 4—58—3.

² The grammarians explain that the Bull is the word. The four horns are four classes into which it is divided, the three feet the three tenses, the seven hands the seven cases, and so on!

off significance, but have a freedom of movement over a wide and connected range of meanings all of which are naturally suggested by their etymology and it is only the intention of the speaker as expressed by the context that decides which one of its several meanings a word conveys in a particular place. Thus, the Vedic use of the word '*gau*' so as to give both the meanings of cow and light is no artificial figure of double entendre, but a natural consequence of the peculiar character of the Vedic speech. A further extension of this method by which a word is made to convey more than one meaning is illustrated by the use of the word '*āśva*'. Coming from a root which means, among other things, to possess, to enjoy, to reach, to attain, it signifies not only a horse, but, by the packing of all these different senses into one idea so as to derive a cumulative effect, it is also made to stand as a designation of vital force—the Vedic Steed of Life. Influenced by this peculiar character of the language the Vedic Rishis are naturally led into a symbolic diction and they use words like '*gau*' and '*āśva*' to convey under cover of their external physical meaning an inner psychological conception.

And they use these symbols with great looseness ; sometimes as algebraic signs which, in order to be understood, have to be overridden, have to be converted into their real values ; sometimes as equally capable of both the outward and the inner sense ; sometimes they keep the external image for its poetical value of suggestion and sometimes they lose sight of it altogether in the preoccupation with the inner psychological sense. That is why the Vedic poets are able to speak of Indra's rapture as cow-giving ; to speak of *dhiyah go-agrāh* (1—90—5) and *matayah āsvayogāh* (1—186—7)—" thoughts with their front of light " or " thoughts yoked with the quick energies of Life " ; and, again, combining the two symbols of the Cow and the Horse, to speak of the higher divine mind of leading with its front or summit of Light and with its swift impulsions of the energy of Life—*devyā pramatyā...go-agrayā āsvāvatyā*. (1—53—5).

We shall now illustrate the other main difficulty concerning what we have called the peculiar mode of thought of the Vedic

Rishis by referring to their use of the concrete image of "the Waters" for the abstract idea of existence. The general notion of existence common to all existences, in itself indeterminate and fluid but taking determinate form and fixity in individual existences, was expressed by them by the image of "the Waters", of "the Ocean"—*āpah, salila, samudra, arṇah, etc.* And the idea of forms of being or principles of existence was expressed by the image of the Streams or the Rivers—*nadī, srotas, vartanih,* etc. A somewhat similar use of the image of the waters seems to be made by the Hebrew scripture when it speaks of the Spirit of God brooding over the waters. This method of presenting general notions in apt concrete images that seem somehow psychologically inevitable, appears to be universal and to come naturally to the mind of man before it turns in the direction of a predominantly intellectual development. But this is to be distinguished, as radically different, from the process of allegorising in which the intellectual fancy of certain poets takes delight—a sort of deliberately contrived double entendre of the idea similar to the artificial double entendre of the word.

We can now understand how these peculiarities of diction and thought of the Vedic seers, together with the serious gap in tradition, made the Veda almost a sealed book to the subsequent generations. And it will also have been perceived by now that a sound view of the origins and development of words and ideas is an invaluable if not indispensable aid to the interpretation of the Veda ; for it is in the light of that view that we must be able to understand the peculiar characteristics of the Vedic Speech. The language of the Veda is much nearer to its origins than any other that we know of and its words seem to preserve some special virtues of their nascent condition. Sri Aurobindo has given a few of the results of his investigations into this aspect of the subject in an all too brief chapter in his series on the Secret of the Veda ; but the little he has given is full of illuminating glimpses into the origins and development of language and thought and has an important bearing upon the many characteristic features of the Vedic Speech. He suggests

that language starts with certain seed-sounds which give rise to a number of root-words and these go on putting out branches in all directions. Speech and Significance, Vak and Artha, are first shaped by the sense-mind of man, certain original language-sounds being associated, by an inherent psychological fitness, with certain sense perceptions, emotional reactions and practical utilities. Language did not start as a code with certain sound-forms each made and designed to convey a single precise idea. An original sound-form had a general psychological character or quality which it shared in common with a group of kindred sound-forms and it expressed in common with the group a vaguely outlined general significance. It was hence capable of a great number of varying applications within the general significance. Variations in sound-form would be called forth by the need to express variations of the general significance, and so words would launch on their career of specialisation. It is thus that language in its early stages happens to abound in words which denote a great variety of senses and also in a redundant multiplicity of words which express the same or similar sense. But when words begin to become fully individual in character, this state of things changes. There is the need for economy and efficiency which increasingly does away with all undue over-loading and overlapping. Thus, language begins with living-sounds which have a life of their own, a life that determines their sense and presides over its transformations and it ends in words which almost become lifeless and conventional signs for ideas. Again, looking from the side of idea, language starts with a small stock of very general and concrete notions, all immediately derivable from sense perceptions. Because of the need to express clearly different shades and varieties of idea, there is an increasing progression from the vague to the precise, from the general to the particular, from the concrete to the abstract, from the physical to the psychological and so on. And there are fixed laws of development observable in the evolution of ideas as in the evolution of words.

Now, by a knowledge of the laws that governed the association of certain sound-forms with certain sense-values in the Sanskrit tongue and by a close study of its word-families and also of their kindred in allied tongues whenever necessary it is possible, Sri Aurobindo thinks, to reconstruct to a great extent the past history of individual words, to account for the many different, and sometimes even contradictory, sense-values that a single word comes to possess, and even to restore lost senses of words.¹ It is possible to have a reliable scientific basis for our renderings of Vedic words instead of having to depend on mere ingenious conjecture. And we can account for the peculiar features of the Vedic Speech in the light of the knowledge of the fundamental processes of language development. It is needless to point out that a philological method based upon a true Science of Language and Thought is sure to be of essential help in the interpretation of the Vedic hymns.

The Vedic word has a peculiarly live quality which we must fully appreciate in order to understand the precise character of Sri Aurobindo's psychological theory of the Veda and not imagine that it is just an exercise in allegorical exegesis with which one is so familiar in India and elsewhere. We have already said that it is this peculiar quality of the Vedic word which led the Rishis into a symbolic diction. The Vedic word presents directly and primarily the general meaning of the root from which it is derived and almost as a sort of inference and secondarily the particular meaning which, on a given occasion, it is intended to convey. "*Vṛka*" is first and foremost the tearer and *therefore* a wolf also. "*Dhenu*" is fosterer and so it could mean either a cow or a stream as occasion demanded. So the poets of the Vedic age could use these words to convey the ideas of tearing and fostering in a psychological sense under cover of the physical image of the wolf and the cow or the stream. Thus, Indra is said to create for the sacrificer "the wolf-less (!) illuminations"

¹ For an instance of this we shall point out to the fixing of the Vedic word '*dakṣa*' in the sense of intuitive discrimination by Sri Aurobindo. The reader is referred to the exhaustive discussion on the word in the Arya.

—‘*avṛkāṇi jyotiṁṣi*’ (1—55—6), and the protecting influences of the gods¹ and the gods themselves are called ‘*avṛka*’. And ‘*Dhenu*’ is used as an image for ‘*manīṣa*’ or thought (3—57—1) and also as an adjective to both thought and speech. Again, the different senses of the same word were not kept entirely separate. For instance, ‘*bhaga*’ has the sense of both enjoyment and share, ‘*vana*’ of delight and forest, ‘*canas*’ of food and pleasure. The Vedic poets use such words, sometimes conveying both the senses together and sometimes bringing one of them only forward and keeping the other in the background so as to throw its suggestion on to the overt sense. The physical and psychological meanings of these words go hand in hand with varying degrees of prominence and contribute to both the external and the inner sense of the thought of the Rishis. Thus, ‘*bhaga*’ is the portion which the deity bestows upon the worshipper, but at the same time it means the joy which the presence of the deity creates in him. ‘*Vana*’ is sometimes used solely in its psychological sense and when used prominently in its physical sense as is often done, it is so used that the suggestion of its psychological sense always hovers over it. ‘*Canas*’ is the food-offering in the external worship but it denotes the inner offering of delight as well. The names of the Vedic gods—Agni, Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Savita, Surya and so on are not appellatives, they are epithets significant of their functions. The enemies of the gods too have intriguing names—*Vṛtra* the coverer, *Dasyu* the destroyer, *Vṛka* the tearer, *Vala* the encircler, *Paṇi* the trafficker and so on. It is clear that Vedic words are in live contact with their roots, roots which in many cases are multi-significant; and it is this vital quality of the words which enables the Vedic Rishis to use them as vehicles for their profound psychological conceptions.

We are now in a position to give some brief and general indication of the psychological theory of the Veda which has been advanced by Sri Aurobindo. The Riks are hymns that grew

¹ *avṛkāḥ pāyavah*. (4—4—12).

round the Yajna or the Vedic ritual of worship, which as evidenced by the hymns themselves is already sufficiently elaborate. A rite in itself is ever symbolic, a dramatic representation, so to say, in word and gesture and act, of the sacred feelings—of awe and reverence, of adoration and aspiration. The gods of the Veda are presented with their several functions and attributes and myths and legends which are plainly symbolic are woven round them. But no consistent and adequate explanation of the symbolism has been given either by the traditional commentators or the western scholars. It is probable that certain conceptions of the gods and some of the myths had originated in naturalistic and in some cases more specifically from astronomical phenomena. But in the Rig Veda itself it is evident that the intention is not at all to present natural phenomena in the garb of myth and legend. Such an intention can be easily perceived in some of the stories in the Brahmanas. The naturalistic key, either of the traditional or western make, does not always fit into the Vedic symbolism. It does not offer a consistent explanation of it. But the Veda, except for certain secular and other compositions of a markedly disparate character, looks all of a piece and its symbolism, whatever its meaning, is neither incipient nor shifting but well developed, minutely elaborated and almost rigidly fixed. There is, on the face of it, a great similarity of form and matter throughout the Veda, in spite of personal variations in style and manner of presentation. We meet continuously with the same fixed terms, the same expressions and phrases, the same set formulæ. Any explanation, therefore, of the Vedic symbolism must be consistently applicable throughout and if we have to be continually shifting and varying our ground in interpreting it, we can be sure we have not got the right clue at all.

Sri Aurobindo has conclusively shown that there lies at the core of the Vedic symbolism a psychological and spiritual meaning. Under the external figures of ritual and myth and legend what the Vedic poets present is a spiritual aspiration and knowledge. The ritual of the Yajna, as we find it in the Rig Veda, is not primitive, it is already elaborate in form, as we just

now said. We know nothing of its past history and we can only speculate whether it was the result of a gradual development out of primitive forms of worship or whether these were appropriated by an age of intensive spiritual culture and organised as vehicles of its higher aspiration and deeper knowledge. However that might be, in the Rig Veda the Yajna is entirely symbolic, every aspect and feature of it. The gods are powers of the supreme Godhead at work in man and the universe. That these gods are not the inhabitants of some mythological heaven, that they are powers of consciousness is made abundantly clear by the full and minute psychological characterisation bestowed upon them throughout the hymns and the naturalistic theories cannot explain it away and the ritualistic theories cannot account for it.

Let us take the god Agni, for instance. It is true he is worshipped as the altar fire and is even produced, for the purpose of the ritual, by some sort of fire-drill. But this Fire is the priest himself, he who takes man's worship and consecrated action into himself and leads them to their destination. He is "the immortal in mortals"¹ he "is born in that which is the very foundation of man"²; the gods create him with their thoughts,³ the seers guard him in their hearts.⁴ He is the Seer-Will,—*Kavi-kratuḥ*. He is the 'eye'⁵ that guides the mind. He is the divine worker in man, and man's messenger to the gods. He is groomed like a horse by the worshippers, whom he carries over to the vast Home of the Truth. "He is the seeker and worker, he it is that travels to the delight. He is established in the highest (or the nearest) sheath. He speaks of the ways of knowledge to men, for he has the knowledge. He is Agni, the True and Knower of the Truth".⁶ "He is the moveless Light placed within us that we may see and he is the mind, swiftest-moving of all things that

¹ Amartyam martyeṣu. (4—1—1).

² Ayam jāyata manuṣo dharimāni. (1—128—1).

³ Devāso agnim janayanta cittibhiḥ. (3—2—3).

⁴ Kavayaḥ hr̥dā rakṣamāṇā ajuryam. (1—146—4).

⁵ Cakṣuḥ codayanmati. (5—8—6).

⁶ Sa im mṛgo apyo vanargur upa tvacyupamasyām nidhāyi; vyabravīd vayunā martyebhyognir vidvān ṛtaciddhi satyaḥ. (1—145—5).

speed. All the gods, one in mind, one in perception, move rightly on their various paths towards him who is the one Will.”¹ There can be no doubt, in the face of this, that the Rishis did not worship either the physical fire or some mythological fire-god of the sacrifice. What they worshipped was the Divine Will under the figure of the sacrificial fire.

The Maruts, usually represented as storm-gods, have some prominently physical features associated with them. They seem to have originated not so much as storm-powers but as lightning-powers. But there is no doubt that in the Veda they are invested with psychological functions. They are hearers of the Truth and seer-poets—*satyaśrutāḥ kavayaḥ*. They are the symbol for the host of thought energies which move towards the Light. After the dawn of the divine illumination, they are said to undergo a new birth according to the innate law of their nature and assume the sacrificial name.² They sing the *brahman*, the chant of the soul, to Indra (8—89—3); they are the singers of the hymn—*brahmāṇah*. Indra is their companion and he is said to bestow upon the worshipper the host of the Maruts as a gift (2—11—14). The Maruts worship Indra who is their seer or Rishi (5—29—1).

Indra, from which word we have “*indriya*”, the name for sense faculties, is the lord of the luminous mind or Swar which receives the light of the Sun of the divine Truth. He is the seeker of the cows of Light—*gaveśanah* and his gift to the worshipper is, as we have already seen, the gift of Light—of “the fearless light”, *abhayam jyotiḥ*, of “the light in which there is no hurt of division”, *avṛkam jyotiḥ*, “the light which is immortal”, *amṛtam jyotiḥ*, “the light that glows beyond heaven”, *paro yad idhyate divā* (8—6—30). “Throw open the

¹ Dhruvam jyotir nihitam dṛśaye kam mano jvaṣṭham patayatsvantaḥ, viśve devāḥ samanasaḥ saketaḥ ekam kratum abhi vi yanti sādhu. (6—9—5).

² Samuṣadbhir ajāyathāḥ. Ād aha swadhām anu punar garbhatvam erire, dadhānā nāma yajñīyam. (1—6—3, 4). After their illumination the thought powers become new-born and enter into the work of the divine movement. This is what is meant by the assumption of the sacrificial name by the Maruts.

pen of the cows", *gavām apa vrajam vrdhi* (1—10—7), is the prayer of the Vedic seers to Indra and the fount of these cows is in the highest realm—' *utsa āsām parama sadhasthe* ' (5—45—8). He is the friend of Kutsa and Ushana, types of the aspiring soul. He razes to the ground the fortified cities of Sambara, the wily Asura. Their number is variously given as three or nine or ninety-nine, and the hundredth he destroys for Divodasa for his "self-extension into the All"—*śatatamam veśyam sarvatātā* (4—26—3). He strikes down Vritra who lies enshrouding the waters with his darkness. He breaks into pieces Vala who pens the "herd of the self-luminous cows" in his stone enclosure. We forbear from entering here into a discussion of the meaning behind these exploits of Indra, but their psychological and spiritual suggestions, we believe, are clear and unmistakable.

We find the same kind of spiritual symbolism in respect of the other gods and goddesses of the Veda. Ushas or the Dawn is the illumination of the divine knowledge breaking on the mind of man. Surya is the divine Supramental Truth, the Self of all that moves and all that is stable and as Savita he is the divine Creator. As Mitra he is the lord of Harmony, the divine Friend of man and as Varuna he is the lord of the Vast Consciousness. Pushan, the nourisher and increaser, is a form of Surya. Bhaga is the divine enjoyer in man, and Aryaman, the lord of his aspiration and his upward labour, and these too are Solar deities, powers of the Sun of Truth. The symbolism of these gods is, as revealed by Sri Aurobindo, marvellously profound and subtle, appears as the natural flowering of a deep knowledge and strong discipline and has a perfectly poetic quality. It has no resemblance whatsoever to the prosaic and intellectual allegories which seem to be made from time to time in all countries about divine virtues and spiritual knowledge. Agni himself becomes these gods or he manifests and establishes them in man in the courses and seasons of the progressing Yajna. They bring to birth "the other wide world" even in "the narrowness" here; their fostering creates the bliss even in this world of fear and peril—*bhaya ā cin mayobhu*. They are

different Names of the One Existent, various Powers and Personalities of the Supreme Godhead. They have their several functions to perform in the great movement of the soul from its present state of "threefold bondage" to that of Freedom and Immortality—to Aditihood.

We have said that all the features of the Vedic Sacrifice are symbolical. As we cannot enter in detail into their precise interpretation, we shall merely indicate the symbolical intention behind them. The several officiating priests with their different functions in the ritual of the Yajna—*Hotā*, *Ritvik*, *Adhvaryu*, *Brahmā*, etc., are all representative of the various aspects or powers of the human personality. Their number is usually seven and we know of the ancient idea that the world is created by a seven-fold principle and that all created things are therefore seven-fold. Often it is Agni and sometimes the other gods, too, who officiate at the sacrifice. This makes clear the symbolic nature of the officiation. And the various oblations, too, have their inner significance, their esoteric meaning. Let us take for example the oblations of "*ghṛta*" and "*madhu*". The "*ghṛta*" has its "secret name", "*guhyaṃ nāma*", says the Vedic seer; it is their way of saying that the "*ghṛta*" oblation represents some other than material significance which is purposely kept hidden. And so too about the Soma. "He presses out the juice of the creeper and thinks he has drunk of the Soma; the Soma of which the sacred singers know, no one partakes of it."¹ "Those whose bodies have not passed through the fire, the un-baked vessels, they do not enjoy it; only the fire-baked ones, bearing it in them, have of it the perfect enjoyment."² The offering of "*ghṛta*" into the sacrificial fire is often likened to the offering up of the mind's thoughts and impulses to the godhead: "may we offer up the mind's impulsion with knowledge, as if with a ladle the clarified butter".³ It is the clear bright-flowing thought of the

¹ Somam manyate papivān yat sampiśantyōsadhīm, Somam yam brahmāṇo vidur na tasyāśnāti kaścana. 10—85—3.

² Ataptatanūr na tad āmo āsnute śṛtāsa id vahantas tat samāśata. 9—83—1.

³ Ā manīṣām . . . sruceva ghṛtam juhavāma vidmaṇā. 1—110—6,

mind that is concretely imaged by the *ghṛta*¹ oblation, as it is the heart's delight and the spirit's bliss that are imaged by *madhu* or Soma-wine. We have therefore "*ghṛtācī*", an adjective from "*ghṛta*", applied to mind and thought, as in "*ghṛtācīm dhiyam*" (1—2—7) and in "*sumatir ghṛtācī*" (3—30—7). And when the Vedic poet says that it is the "*ghṛita*"-imbued milk—" *ghṛtavat payaḥ* "—of Heaven and Earth, the divine parents of man's being, that the illumined seers taste with their thoughts in the immutable world of the Gandharva, the guardian of the mystic Wine of Delight², only a mind that has shut itself behind doors triple-locked with prejudice can resist the conclusion that the "*ghṛta*" is a concrete figure for a psychological conception.

But the greatest difficulty is as regards the real significance of the fruits of the sacrifice. It would appear at first sight that the Vedic poets are always beseeching the gods for material gifts—food and wealth, cattle and rain and so on. We shall first take the important case of the rain. We are often told that the Yajna is the motive force which keeps the cosmic life-cycle continually revolving between heaven and earth. This is explained to mean that the oblation offered into the sacrificial fire ascends to the sun and comes down in the form of rain, which produces abundant food for men and cattle; and out of this food and the yield of the cattle oblations are offered again and the cycle goes on. One of the chief objects of the Yajna is, therefore, rain, "*vṛṣṭi*" and the gods are rain-givers, "*vṛṣaṇah*". But this word '*vṛṣan*' occurs so often in contexts where it is impossible to translate it as rain-giving and the commentators too render it otherwise. Indra is often called '*Vṛṣan*' and '*Vṛṣabha*', which ordinarily mean a bull, and the bull in the usual manner of the thought

¹ The root 'ghṛ' from which the word is derived, conveys the ideas of flowing and of a warm glowing brightness. It is this general meaning of the root that is made to apply to both thought and material "*ghṛta*". The word '*Soma*', like the words '*Sūrya*' and '*Savitā*', is derived from the root '*Su*', which means to impel, to release forth, to create, etc. and as such is apt for typifying Ananda or the divine bliss.

² *Tayor it ghṛtavat payo viprā rihanti dhītibhiḥ, gandharvasya dhruve pade.* 1—22—14.

of the Veda is intended as a significant image. The root from which these words are derived, besides meaning to rain, to bestow, conveys the ideas of supremacy, might, abundance, lofty eminence, fecundating power, etc.¹ When Indra was called *Vṛṣan* or *Vṛṣabha* by the Vedic poet, we must remember that what these words conveyed to his mind were primarily the ideas of supremacy, might etc. and that their ordinary meaning of bull was to him secondary and merely furnished him with a suggestive concrete image. Incidentally, we should take care not to fall into the complacent idea that we are in the presence of an inferior type of mentality which figured its gods as animals.

And what is the '*Vṛṣṭi*', which ordinarily means rain, that the Vedic poets seek of the gods? '*Vṛṣṭi*' again is a '*guhyaṃ nāma*', the external image of the rain being merely the vehicle of a psychological significance. To the Vedic poets it meant "the raining of the world of Light". "We desire from you both Mitra and Varuna the rain, the divine favour that perfects, the immortality—" *vṛṣṭim vām rādho amṛtatvaṃ imahe*" (5—63—3). Need we say that the association of the rain or the '*vṛṣṭi*' with '*amṛtatva*' is significant? Elsewhere, Indra is said to fight towards his own self-raining—'*sva-vṛṣṭim asya yudhyatah*' (1—53—14). It is to be marked that this rain is not from the clouds sealed up by Vritra, it is his own self-raining, the raining of Swar of which he is the lord. He wins for the worshipper the waters that contain the light of heaven—the luminous waters—" *svarvatīr apah*". He is invoked to win the waters every day—" *apo jayā dive dive*" (8—15—6). Agni, Indra and Soma find "the cows the waters and the heaven"—" *gā apah svah*"; and this phrase in which these three apparently incongruous entities are grouped together is repeated many a time as a set formula.

¹ See the words '*varṣīyas*' and '*varṣiṣṭha*', which are taken as the comparative and superlative forms of '*vṛddha*' in classical Sanskrit; the words '*varṣman*' height etc., '*vṛṣṇyam*', fecundating power. The use of the word '*vṛṣan*' in compounds is instructive: '*vṛṣan-vasu*', of mighty or supreme wealth; '*vṛṣa-maṇah*', of powerful mind; '*vṛṣa-gaṇah*' and '*vṛṣa-vrātaḥ*', having mighty hosts. '*Vṛṣabha*' is used as an adjective to '*manyu*' in '*vṛṣabheva manyunā*'.

The battle course or 'āji', which again is a figure for the soul's upward striving and in which the sacrificer is helped on by the gods, is called "*swar-mīlha*" or that which has the raining down of Swar, the world of Light, or "*sahasra-mīlha*", that which has the raining down of the thousand—hundred or thousand in the Veda representing the plenitude of attainment. The heavenly rain for which the soul of the Vedic poet yearns and thirsts is not the rain from the clouds; it is the downpour from the luminous divine mind represented by Indra. It may be noted, here again as in the case of other symbol words, that the word *Vṛṣṭi*, ordinarily meaning rain, was not arbitrarily chosen to denote a certain esoteric meaning, but that the character of the word itself, its ability to extend to over a number of various significances, its '*vibhūtva*' as one commentator calls this quality of the Vedic word and its consequent many-sided suggestions made it a natural vehicle for the spiritual conception that it was intended to convey.

The cow and the horse are two of the chief boons sought of the gods by the sacrificer. We have already referred to the inner meaning of '*gau*' and '*aśva*', which are two of the key-words of the Veda. They represent together, under material images, the constant Vedic dualism of Light and Power, knowledge and energy of action, for which we have a number of word-pairs occurring in the hymns, such as '*Kāvyā* and '*paumsya*', '*dyumna*' and '*Vṛṣṇya*', '*dhīrāh*' and '*āpasah*', etc. Some of the words for the many other desires of the Rishis are: '*rayi*', '*dhana*', '*ratna*', '*vasu*', usually rendered by Sayana as wealth; '*iṣ*', '*vāja*', '*canas*', '*prayas*', usually rendered as food; '*śravas*', as food, fame, wealth, hymn, glorious deed; '*ṛta*', as water or truth or Yajna or sun or in so many other ways; '*kratu*' and '*dhī*', as ritual action; '*vīra*', '*toka*', '*tanaya*', '*prajā*', as retainer, son or progeny. We cannot read a few Suktas consecutively without coming across some of these words a number of times. They are among what may be called the fixed technical terms of the Veda and any interpretation of the Veda must stand or fall with the interpretation given to them.

Sayana's handling of these words is to say the least extremely loose. Rita, which may be termed the key-word of the Veda, the word for its central conception, and which is to be invariably rendered as Truth, Sayana renders in any number of ways according to the exigencies of the moment. Such a plainly psychological term as '*dhī*' for thought is made to yield by preference the sense of rite or ritualistic action. '*Kratu*', which in classical Sanskrit means a Vedic rite, means in the Veda 'power of action', 'will'. It is used in this sense in the Upanishads also, for instance in the sentence, '*kratumayah puruṣah*'—the will is the man.¹ Sayana takes it in the sense of knowledge or work and more often in the latter sense. To '*śravas*' he gives a number of incompatible senses. In the Veda it means the soul's faculty of hearing the voice of Truth, the inner audition, or that which is heard by it, inspiration. These fixed terms of the Veda must normally have a fixed sense and we cannot go on changing their meaning from hymn to hymn or from verse to verse in the same hymn, as Sayana is forced to do. The rest of the words above mentioned are all used symbolically. Sometimes they are used by themselves without anything added in the context which would bring their inner significance to the surface, as symbol words whose hidden meaning is presumed to be known to the initiates; but quite as often their real hidden sense is made unmistakably plain and inescapable by the context. For instance, the '*rayi*' or wealth prayed for is "the discoverer of Heaven"—'*rayim svarvidam*' (8—13—5) and the "possessor of Heaven"—'*rayih svarvān*' (6—22—3). It is the destroyer of evil thoughts—'*prabhaṅgam durmatīnām rayim*' (8—46—19) and it is that which breaks up the denials of expression of the hostile powers—'*yo bhanakti vanuṣām aśatīh*' (6—68—6). It is described as shining white—'*enīm rayim*' (5—33—6) and as being a flood of Light—'*go-arṇasam rayim*' (10—38—2). Surely this '*rayi*' can be no sort of material wealth. But if we hold fast to the theory that the primitive peoples of the Vedic age could not think of anything beyond material wealth in their prayers to

¹ Chāndogya-Upanishad (3—14—1).

their deities ; or if we lay it down as unalterable that the Rishis prayed for material wealth here and heavenly enjoyments hereafter, as the only possible rewards for their ritual sacrifices, then it may not be impossible to wriggle out of the most adversely decisive contexts—on condition that we do not mind taking undue liberties with the meaning of words. When the Vedic poet says, “*iṣam svaśca dhīmahi*”—may we hold by the thought the godward impulsion and the world of Light” (7—66—9), the incompatibility between the sense of physical food and of the world of Light is too violent even for Sayana and so he makes ‘*svar*’ to mean water, and explains the passage as a prayer for food and water—‘*annam udakam ca dhārayemahi*’. But the more reasonable course would be not to do violence to the text in this manner but to lay aside our preconceived notions as regards the Vedic poets. We cannot go even briefly into the real inner sense of ‘*iṣ*’, ‘*vāja*’¹ and the other words we have mentioned, but what has been stated is, we believe, a sufficient indication of the all-pervading symbolic intention of the Vedic poets. The whole setting of the sacrifice and all its features were so devised as to carry a spiritual and psychological significance. We shall just point out here to what may appear as a small detail, but it is highly significant as showing the spiritual nature of the atmosphere in which the ancient Yajna moved ; ‘*brahman*’, the word or chant of the soul’s creative power, usually rendered as prayer, and ‘*barhis*’ a seat spread out for the gods on the altar, ‘*bṛhat*’ which, besides meaning the vast plane of Truth-consciousness, means also a kind of *Sāman*—these words so intimately connected with the Yajna are all

¹ We are aware that, to establish the real meaning of any one of these terms on a secure basis, a thorough and exhaustive discussion of a good number of relevant passages is necessary. We shall probably find in the course of such a discussion, that it is necessary to settle the meaning of a dozen other terms before we can settle the meaning of the term with which we started out. Then the discussion will have to range over these dozen other terms also. All this work is necessary but it cannot be attempted here. But at the end of it all, we have to read the Veda hymn by hymn, take each hymn as a whole, and then satisfy ourselves whether we have arrived at its real meaning.

derived from the root 'bṛh'¹—the same root which later gave to Indian religion and philosophy their name for the ultimate spiritual principle of all existence.

One very important point to remember about the psychological theory of the Veda is that the clues to it are derived, as we must have already seen, from the Veda itself. The Veda itself quite often insists upon the inner spiritual significance of its figures and symbols, myths and legends. "When they say He is come out of the horse", says a Vedic seer, "I understand Him to be born out of luminous energy; He is come out of the mind's force, He resides in the mansions; whence he is born, of that Indra has the knowledge".² The Vedic seers declare that their words are words of secret import to be unravelled by the seer—'*nīṇyā vacānsi nivacanā kavaye*' (4—3—16). Very often, as in the hymns of Dirghatamas and especially of Vamadeva, the outer veil of symbol is thinned into transparency permitting us to see clearly into its secret significance and at times the true spiritual sense of the Veda stands out uncovered, trailing at its feet figure and symbol like an unloosed garment. The psychological theory is, therefore, no key brought from outside and tried upon the Veda to see if it fits; the Rishis have put the key in the Veda itself, leaving instructions as to how it is to be turned. It is for us to follow those instructions.

We have thus far attempted to give a brief and general indication of Sri Aurobindo's new interpretation of the Veda. To bring home to the mind of the reader the precise character and full import of this interpretation, it would be necessary to go through a good number of Sri Aurobindo's renderings of the hymns, and fully discuss the philological and other justification of the renderings. We shall then have to see what Sayana's commentary and the western scholars have to say upon the hymns

¹ The root 'bṛh' or 'bṛñh' means to grow, to expand, to spread out, to increase; but the derivatives of the root show that it was more especially applied to growth, expansion, etc. of the spiritual order.

² *Aśvād iyāyeti yad vadantyojaso jātam uta manya enam, manyor iyāya harmyeṣu tasthan yatah prajāñā indro asya veda.* 10—73—10.

in question. It would also be necessary to raise all the difficulties that the psychological theory has to face and resolve them. Such a task is beyond the scope of the present article which is intended only to give a general outline of the theory. We shall, therefore, limit ourselves in the rest of the article to a brief consideration of the two central myths of the Veda—the great quest of the Angiras Rishis for the lost Cows and the slaying of Vṛtra by Indra and the consequent release of the pent-up Rivers.

The Veda frequently refers to the Ancient Fathers of the race, ‘*pūrve pitarah*’, in whose great discovery and attainment its knowledge and discipline are avowedly founded.¹ They are illumined seers whose number is often given as seven—*sapta viprāh*, *sapta ṛṣayah*. Vamadeva refers to them as our human forefathers here who found the Light—“*asmākam atra pitaro manuṣyāh . . . vidanta jyotiḥ*” (4—1—13, 14). They were also held to be divine beings, sons of Heaven, warriors of the Divine—*divas putrāso asurasya vīrāh* (10—67—2). They have a third, a strongly symbolic character which seems to take up into itself both their human and divine characters. The Veda itself insists on the inherent significance of their name, which gives the key to their mystic symbolism. The word ‘Angiras’ is derived from ‘*ang*’, a variant of the root ‘*ag*’, from which ‘*Agni*’ is derived. The roots mean, among other things, to move, to lead, to be forceful, to blaze. The words *Agni* and *Angiras* appear to suggest strongly the ideas of leading onward, of being forceful and of flaming brightly, all together. *Agni* is himself called the first Angiras and the first “most-Angiras”, *prathamō angirāh*, *prathamō angirastamah*,² and the Angiras Rishis are said to be sons of *Agni* born around him out of heaven.³ And if more proof is needed to indicate their symbolic character, Vamadeva is there to furnish it. “May we be born”, he says,

¹ Seyam asme sanajā pitryā dhīh. This in us is that thought of the Ancient Fathers. (3—39—2).

² 1—31—1, 2.

³ Angirasas sūnavas te agneh parijajñire. ye agneh parijajñire virūpāso divaspari. (10—62—5, 6).

“out of Dawn the Mother as the seven illumined Seers, the first ordainers of the Powers of the Sacrifice. May we become the Angirases, sons of Heaven and may we, growing bright and pure, break open the treasure-filled hill”.¹

In spite of slight variations of feature, there is unity and consistency in the various references to the Angiras legend throughout the Rig Veda. As the Maruts are the chief companions of Indra in his fight with Vritra, so it is the Angirases who form his cohort when he fights with Vala or the Paṇis, breaks open the impregnable hill and releases the imprisoned cows. Sometimes it is the Angiras Rishis themselves who achieve this victory, who with the divine word—*vacasā daivyaena*—open wide the firm cow-pen, or who rend the earth and uncover the ruddy dawns.² And be it noted that the cows here have changed places with the dawns. Sometimes the Rishis ally themselves with Brihaspati the Āngirasa, Master of the creative word and the victorious power of the soul; and then it is he that, with the ‘phalanx that sings the hymn of the happy surging rhythm and the chant of the illumination’, breaks Vala into pieces by his cry.³ And sometimes it is the impetuous Ayāsyā, he too an Āngirasa, who leads the charge and crushes the impounders of the radiant treasure. There is also Sarama the fair-footed goddess, later definitely figured as the Hound of Heaven, who discovers the vulnerable spot of the hill, who first makes the great way to it a continuous passage and who leads Indra and the seven illumined seers to the front of the indestructible cows, for it is she who first goes to them recognising their voice.⁴ And, though the protagonist in this great contest with Vala is Indra, the other gods too, Agni, the Maruts, the Asvins and even Saraswati are all considered as

¹ Adhā mātūr ūśasah sapta viprā jāyemahi prathamā vedhaso nṛṇ, divasputrā āngiraso bhavema adrim rujema dhaninam śucantah (4—2—15).

² Vacasā daivyaena vrajam gomantam uśijo vivavruh. (4—1—15).

Kṣāma bhindanto aruṇir apa vran. (4—2—16).

³ Sa suṣṭubhā sa ṛkvatā gaṇena valam ruroja phaligam raveṇa. (4—50—5).

⁴ Vidad yadī saramā rugṇam adrer mahi pāthah pūrvyam sadhryak kah, Agram nayat supadī akṣarāṇām acchā ravam prathamā jānati gāt. (3—31—6).

breakers of Vala and releasers, to the worshipper, of the captive cows.

What are we to make of this legend? There is no doubt that it is symbolic, but what does it symbolise? Is it all about some great prehistoric tribal conflict that had lodged itself in the race-memory, or is it a fanciful account of cattle-lifting, which must have been a very common occurrence in primitive pastoral life? Or do the cows represent the morning rays and is the whole myth merely the story of the night breaking into dawn? Or is the myth a confused medley of all these? Or is it a mythological story of the human ancestors of the race conceived as demiurges, for the Angirases are said not only to release the dawns but also to extend earth and heaven and make the sun go up the sky?

The last supposition would seem to be warranted if we take certain passages dealing with the legend out of their context and read them independently of all cross references from other hymns. But it is easy to see even in the light of the few quotations from the hymns already given in this connection that the supposition would break down if we apply it to the legend as a whole. Let us see if the story is about the dawn. We have seen that the cows and the dawns in the myth are interchangeable. So the rescued cows may represent the dawn breaking out of the darkness. But there is a passage concerning the Angirases which readily disproves at least the theory that the legend refers to the daily event of the dawn breaking out of the night. "Ye, the Fathers who drove upward the wealth of the cows, Ye, who by the Truth battered down Vala in the coming round of the year"¹—so are the Angirases invoked. There may possibly be here, so far as the external figure is concerned, a reference to the dawn of the polar regions. But the celebration of the physical dawn, be it our daily dawn or the annual polar dawn, does not at all appear to be the intention of the legend when we examine its other features. The natural-

¹ ya udājan pitaro gomayam vasu rtenābhindan parivatsare valam.

istic clue snaps in our hands and we cannot make our way at all through the legend. The other clues, as we shall see, fare no better than the dawn clue. As for the year in the full revolution of which Vala is said to have been overthrown, we will merely mention in passing, as the matter has come up, that divisions of time, day and night, months and seasons and years, are used in the Rig Veda symbolically so as to represent the conditions and stages in the progress of the spiritual journey which the "*adhvara Yajña*"¹ really is.

The captive cows which are rescued by Indra and the Rishis are very strange cows and not of the earth. We have seen that they are *akṣara*—indestructible, unaging; but this, we may say, can be said of the dawns. But these indestructible cows, we are further told, are held in the bondage of falsehood—*anṛtasya setau*; Brihaspathi wishing for light in the darkness, drives upward the shining cows and throws wide open their three places of confinement. And with the booty of the cows, which is described as *viśvarūpa*—'of all form', he ascends to heaven and still further upward to the higher seats (10—67).

The whole setting of this high exploit of Indra and the Rishis has an unmistakable psychological character about it. It is in their great endeavour to reach the Truth—*ṛtam āśuṣāṇāh*, it is in order to make a path for the immortality—*kr̥ṇvānāso amṛtatvāya gātum*, that the steadfast thinkers and illumined seers, the pristine forefathers, rend asunder the firm cow-pen. This is the motive of the exploit and the men who take part in it are thinkers and seers; and what is the result? They discover the Light and fulfil themselves by the agency of their thoughts—*vidanta jyotiṣ cakṛpanta dhībhiḥ*.²

¹ The word *adhvara* is usually taken to mean 'unhurt' or 'that in which there is no hurting or killing'. It has become a synonym of *Yajña*. Sri Aurobindo says that 'adhvara' is "travelling", "moving", connected with *adhvan*, a path or a journey from the lost root *adh*, to move, extend, be wide, compact, etc. We see the connection between the two words *adhvan* and *adhvara* in *adhva*, "air", "sky" and *adhvara* with the same sense. The passages in the Veda are numerous in which the *adhvara* or *adhvara yajña* is connected with the idea of travelling, journeying, advancing on the path.'

² 4—1—14.

They made a path in us to the vast Heaven—*Cakrur divo bṛhato gātum asme*. They found the day, the heaven, the knowledge-perception and the shining cows or dawns. They reached and held the Truth and enriched its thoughts.¹ And no wonder now that it is by Truth that the Angirases break Vala into pieces; that it is by the divine word that the desirers of the godhead rive the dense compact hill, full of obstructions, which lies around the cows pressing them in and throw open the cow-fold; no wonder that Indra fights the Panis with his words. These are the weapons suited to the spiritual battle that is waged—the power of the creative word and effectuating thought and victorious truth.

Indra following the track of the cows with his companions, we are told, discovers that Truth—the Sun dwelling in the darkness: *satyam tat . . . sūryam viveda tamasi kṣiyantam* (3—39—5). Then follows an exhortation to choose and cleave to the light separating it in knowledge from the darkness—*jyotir vṛṇīta tamaso vijānan* (3—39—7). It is obvious we are moving in a psychological plane. The sun referred to is not the physical luminary of our skies but the Sun of Truth. The dawns can then only be the successive illuminations of Truth. “The dawns shone out”, says Vasishtha, “sinless and bringing forth happy and auspicious days; the lovers of the godhead, meditating and becoming illumined, discovered the Vast Light; they threw open the wide pasture of the cows. They, meditating with the mind of Truth, yoked with their own will, they bear your car, O Indra, O Vayul”² Nothing can be clearer than that this Vast Light, this Sun and these Dawns which are all discovered by men meditating with the mind of Truth—*satyena manasā didhyānāh*—are figures for the inner light of a great knowledge. Vala and the Panis are no human enemies, but are powers that

¹ Viṣṇu chid dṛṣṭvā pitaro na ukthair adrim rujann āngiraso raveṇa, cakrur divo bṛhato gātum asme ahaḥ swar vividuh ketum usrāh. Dadhann ṛtam dhanayann asya dhītm. . . . (1—71—2, 3).

² Ucchann uṣasah sudinā aripṛā uru jyotir vividur didhyānāh, gavyam cid ūrvam uśijo vi vavruh. . . . Te satyena manasā didhyānāh svena yuktāsah kratunā vahanti, indra vāyū vīravāham ratham vām. . . . (7—90—4, 5).

oppose the shining out in man of this great knowledge. And the hill itself in which the luminous cows are hidden is a figure of man's material existence. Sarama who leads Indra and the Rishis to "the supreme hidden treasure of the Panis"—*nidhim paṇīnām paramam guhā hitam* (2—24—6)—has all the characteristics of intuition. The Angirases themselves are powers of the human consciousness in all its levels become divine and achieving the final victory.

The legend of Vritra and the Seven Streams is as important for the understanding of the Veda as the Angiras legend. The confining of "the waters" by Vritra is compared by the Rishis themselves to the imprisoning of the cows by the Pani—*niruddhā āpah paṇineva gāvah*. "The waters were under the lordship of the Dāsa; Serpent Vritra was their king; they were confined by him like the cows by the Paṇi; the outlet of the waters that lay covered up Indra, having killed Vritra, opened wide O hero, you won the cows, you won the Soma, you released the seven rivers into flowing".¹ Vritra is often associated with darkness. He lies enshrouding the waters with his darkness—"darkness that makes even that which contains the waters crooked"—*dharuna-hvaram tamah* (1—54—10). Vritra grows and increases in the sunless darkness—*asūrye tamasi vāvṛdhānam* (5—32—6). Indra and Kutsa are said to roll away the darkness from the waters, from their common dwelling place and from the heart of the bounteous giver.² And lying over their flood he drinks up their sweetness—*arṇam madhupam śayānam*. (5—32—8).

Vritra not only oppresses the waters but also holds under his constraint the two firmaments.³ He would ascend even to the heavens with the *dasyu*-host that does not offer the Soma-wine

¹ Dāsapatnīr ahigopā atisthan niruddhā āpah paṇineva gāvah, apām bilam apihitam yad āsīd vṛtram jaghanvān apa tad vavāra. ajayo gā ajayah śūra somam avāsrjah sartave sapta sindhūn. (1—32—11, 12).

² nih śimadbhyo dhamatho nih sadhasthāt maghono hr̥do varathas tamānsi. (5—31—9).

³ Badbadhānasya rodasī. (1—52—10).

to the gods.¹ Indra, by overthrowing Vritra, kins *svar*, the world of Light—*hano vṛtram jayā suah* (8—89—4). And this great action Indra repeats for his worshippers. Though Indra is the chief Vritra-slayer, the other gods too are Vritra-slayers and the slaying of Vritra appears as a common function of all godhead. And it is not only gods who win heaven by killing Vritra, the human worshippers also accomplish the same victory. “They who adore in true wise with the submission, they worship him, the self-ruler; desiring to cross beyond all hurtful powers, men enkindle Agni with the invocations. Striking down Vritra, they crossed beyond the two firmaments and the waters; they made for the Vast Abode”.²

Here again our purpose is just to indicate the psychological intention of the legend. We cannot understand Vritra as a rain-withholder. We cannot picture him also as a human enemy who is overthrown by the potency of the sacrifice. The Veda often refers to the Vast Abode as the seat of immortality.³ Even if by the striking down of Vritra by the worshipper we are to understand that the worshipper himself is supposed to break open the clouds and to release their waters with the help of the gods, we are at a loss to conceive how this achievement could lead him to the Vast Abode, the seat of the Immortality. It is clear that Vritra is an adverse power of our conscient being holding back its streams from reaching their Ocean-goal. The figure of the Seven Streams is a constant Vedic symbol and even a casual acquaintance with these streams will show that they are neither the rivers of the Punjab nor of central Asia. “The seven mighty Rivers of Heaven, they that have the right thinking and are knowers of the Truth, they found the doors of the felicity; Sarama discovered the firmly closed, wide cow-

¹ Dyām āruruṣatah. (8—14—13).

² Tam ghem itthā nāmasvina upa svarājam āsate, hotrābhir agnim manuṣaḥ samindhate titirvāṁso ati sridhah. Ghnanto vṛtram ataran rodasi apa uru kṣayāya cakrire. (1—36—7, 8).

³ Amṛtāya mahe kṣayāya. (9—109—3).

range, through which the human being comes by his joy".¹ The reaching by the Seven Rivers of their goal of felicity and the discovery by Sarama of the wide realm of the luminous cows are thus associated together; and, if we accept the hypothesis of a spiritual meaning hidden in these two legends, they seem to be closely connected movements in the victorious culmination of man's spiritual quest. The two distinct images of the Cows and the Rivers seem to be getting fused in the mind of Parasara, when in one of his beautiful hymns to Agni, he says: "The fostering cows of the Truth that have the happy udders, lowing, they have filled us, they that are enjoyed in Heaven; the Rivers seeking the happy thinking of the Supreme World flow all over the hill".² And so too with Vamadeva: For, after describing how when the hill was rent asunder the Angirases with the cows raise joyous cries together, greet the dawn all around and then Agni was born and heaven became manifest, he too thinks of the Rivers and says: "The divine Waters immortal and inviolate, may they, O Agni, like a steed galloping in the charge, for ever by the Truth speed forth with honeyed floods".³

Now these can be no pouring floods of rain nor terrestrial streams, that have the right thinking—*su-ādhyah*, that beg of the supreme realm of Truth the mind of happy and right perception—*parāvataḥ sumatim bhikṣamāṇāḥ*. Elsewhere, they are the waters that have the comprehending knowledge—*āpo vicetasah* (1—83—1). The great wealth that is in them and in the sun is bestowed upon the worshipper by the gods—*apsu sūrye mahad dhanam* (8—68—9). The Rishi places in them the thought that wins and possesses heaven—*dhiyam vo apsu dadhiṣe svarṣam* (5—45—11). They are the Seven Mothers—*āpo mātaraḥ sapta*—who give birth to the world and hold it under their sway—

¹ Svādhyo diva ā sapta yahvī rāyo duro vyṛtajñā ajānan, vidad gavyam saramā dṛlham ūrvam yenā nu kam mānuṣī bhojate viṭ. (7—72—8).

² Ṛtasya hi dhenavo vāvaśānāḥ smadūdhniḥ pīpayanta dyubhaktāḥ, parāvataḥ sumatim bhikṣamāṇā vi sindhavaḥ samayā sasrur adrim. (1—73—6).

³ Ṛtena devīr amṛtā amṛktā arṇobhir āpo madhumadbhir agne, vājī na sargeṣu prastubhānah pra sadamit sravitave dadhanyuh. (4—3—12).

janitrīr bhuvanasya patnīh (10—30—10). Their number is not always seven, but sometimes is given as three times seven and also as ninety and nine,—*trih sapta* (10—64—8), *navatim nava* (10—104—8). Of the seven Rivers four are “the upper rivers, floods of sweetness”—*uparāh . . . madhvarṇaso nadyaś catasrah* (1—62—6); obviously these must refer to the four higher worlds in whose movements of becoming the principle of the divine Ananda does not suffer obscuration as it does here in the physical, vital and mental worlds. These seven mighty Rivers flow on to their goal in the Ocean of Superconscience from which starts all creation, in which illumined seer-creators weave a newer and newer weft—*navyam navyam tantum ā tanvate divi, samudre antah kavayah sudīṭayah* (1—159—4).

None will demur now, we believe, to the statement that the Veda is full of mystic symbols of an ancient spiritual knowledge and discipline. We may prefer this or that interpretation for a particular symbolic conception and there may be some symbols whose meaning we may not be able to understand clearly at all, but that there is an all-pervading symbolism in the hymns and that its real inmost sense and intention is psychological and spiritual admits of no doubt. The Veda is concerned in presenting, through symbolic figures and images drawn from the life of its age, from ritual practices and from the phenomena of Nature, a living and traditionally inherited knowledge as regards man's spiritual seeking and goal. The hymns embody a way of spiritual discipline—a Yajna Yoga. Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the hymns brings this out clearly. But it has not been possible here to illustrate his method by citations from his Vedic renderings and to bring into clear light its full import and significance. It is a marvel to see how verse after verse and hymn after hymn that, without the psychological clues, had irritated and vexed you with their seeming obscurities and ineptnesses and chaotic inconsistencies, take shape, under his hand that clears up all confusion, as powerful and ordered progressions of daring thought. We shall, however, append at the end Sri Aurobindo's rendering of a short Vedic hymn, chosen partly from considerations of space, and

also a rendering of it according to Sayana's commentary, with a request to the reader to make for himself a version of the hymn in accordance with the general lines of the naturalistic theory and compare all these together. It is hoped that in this way the reader may, to a slight extent, be enabled to realise what Sri Aurobindo has done for the recovery of the real sense of the Vedic revelation. The Riks, as their name testifies, are hymns to Light—to the Light that leads man from mortality into immortality. After long ages of obscurity they now stand re-revealed. We see them as the fount and origin of India's spiritual knowledge, ready henceforth to guide man in his supreme quest.

APPENDIX

A hymn to Agni 5—19.

(Sri Aurobindo's rendering).

Abhyavasthāḥ prajāyante
pra vavrer vavriś ciketa|
upasthe mātur vi caṣṭe||

States upon states are born,
covering over covering awak-
ens to knowledge, in the lap
of the mother he wholly
sees.

2. Juhure vi citayanto'
nimiṣam nṛmṇam pānti
ā dṛḥhām puram viviśuḥ

They have called to him get-
ting wide knowledge, they
guard sleeplessly the strength,
they have entered into the
strong city.

3. Ā śvaitreyasya jantavo
dyumad vardhanta kṣṣṭayaḥ
niṣkagrīvo brihaduktha
enā madhvā na vājayuḥ ||

The people born on earth in-
crease the luminous (force) of
the son of the white mother ;
he has gold on his neck, he
is large of speech, he is as if
by (the power of) this
honeywine a seeker of plenty.

A hymn to Agni 5—19. (Sri Aurobindo's rendering).

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>4. Priyam dugdham na kāmya
majāmi jāmyoḥ sacā
gharmo na vāja-jaṭharo'
dabdhah śāsvato dabdhah </p> | <p>He is the pleasant and desirable milk, he is a thing un-companioned and is with the two who are companions and is as a heat that is the belly of plenty and is invincible and an overcomer of many.</p> |
| <p>5. Kriṣṇan no rāsma ā bhuvah
sam bhasmanā vāyunā
vevidānah </p> | <p>Play, O Ray and manifest thyself for us, harmonising thy knowledge with the blazing life-god.</p> |
| <p>tā asya san dhṛṣṇajo na
tigmāh
susamśītā vakṣyo
vakṣanesthāh </p> | <p>May these flames of the will that bear our works be violent and keen and sharpened to a perfect intensity and firmly founded in the Bearer of all things.</p> |

(Rendering of the hymn according to Sāyana's commentary).

1. Woe upon woe comes upon Vavri. May the enjoyer of oblations know this (and may he ward them off)—He, Agni, knower of all things which are near to his mother, the earth.
2. Those men who knowing thy greatness ceaselessly invoke thee for the sacrifice and invoking, guard thy strength with the oblation and the praise, they enter a city which is impenetrable to their foes.
3. Men who are born into the world and who conduct the sacrifice, who are adorned with gold, who have extensive hymns of praise, who are desirers of food, they, with this hymn which is as it were honey (or with this hymn and honey), increase the bright strength of the Lightning-Agni, who is the son of the white mid-world.

4. May Agni, who is the helper of Earth and Heaven, listen to our hymn of praise, which is, like milk, desirable and faultless and pleasant. Agni is like the *pravargya* offering which has food in its belly. Unharmd by foes, he the eternal, he slays them.
5. O possessor of rays, who sporting in the forests art well-recognised by the ashes which thou leavest behind and by the wind which impels thee, become favourable to us. The flames of the Fire, they that carry the oblation and are intense with heat and overpower the foe, may they not be scorching-hot to this sacrificer (*i.e.* to me).

Verse 1. Sayana follows the *Anukramaṇika* and makes *Vavri* the Rishi of this hymn. He takes the first *vavri* in the opening verse as the Rishi's name and the second *vavri* as meaning Agni. But *vavra* and *vavri* are both derived from the same root as that which gives the word "*vr̥tra*", and they mean that which covers or obstructs. Sayana himself interprets the word in this sense, for instance, in *vavrim prāmuncatam drāpi-miva cyavānāl* (1—116—10). The mother is Aditi, the infinite consciousness.

Verse 2. It does not appear from Sayana's commentary that he recognises the plainly figurative and symbolic character of the fortified city which is entered by those who invoke Agni and sleeplessly guard the strength.

Verse 3. Sayana explains that *śvaitreya* is Agni of the lightning, for *śvitram* is *antarikṣam* or the mid-world, which is white, and Agni is born as lightning from the *antarikṣa*. But *śvaitreya* appears to be derived from *śvitrī* (cf. *śvitryam gām* 1—33—15), the White Cow or *Aditi*. In the next verse there is reference to the milk of this cow.

The words "*niṣka-grīvah*", "*bṛhad-ukthah*" and "*vājayuh*", all in the singular, are construed by Sayana with the plural "*Kṛṣṭayah*". The disagreement in number is explained by him as a Vedic irregularity. "*Niṣka*", like the many other words that mean "gold", is symbolic of the divine Truth.

Verse 4. The pleasant and desirable milk to which Agni is likened is the milk of Aditi, who is represented as the cow. Vamadeva compares the sight of Agni to the pure and well-heated *ghṛta* of *aghnyā*, the unslayable cow and also to the yield of *dhenu*, the fostering cow ; *aghnyā* and *dhenu* here refer to Aditi (4—1—6). Soma also is compared with Aditi's milk in *payo na dugdham aditer iṣiram* (9—96—15).

The dual *jāmī* refers to Heaven and Earth, the mental and physical planes of man's consciousness. Agni, as well as the other gods, sons of Aditi, of infinite consciousness, is beyond these twin planes. Still he comes down into them and dwells with them for their increase.

Verse 5. *Bhasmanā* means shining or blazing and is used adjectivally. cf. 10—15—2. The harmonising in knowledge of different gods is referred to in other places also of the Veda. For the use of root *vid* with prelx *sam* in this sense, cf. *Dadhikrāvā samvidāna uṣasā sūryeṇādityebhir vasubhir aṅgirobhiḥ* (7—44—4), and *apām naptrā samvidānāsa enāḥ* (10—30—14). In the first passage, it is Agni as *Dadhikrāvan*, heaven's winged steed of flame hewn out of the sun, who is mentioned as in accord with the Dawn, the Sun, the Ādityas, the Vasus and the Aṅgirasas. In the second passage, the Waters are said to be in accord with *Apām napāt*, who is Agni as the son of the Waters.—Vayu is associated not only with Agni but also with other gods, especially Indra. Vayu is mentioned as having Indra for his charioteer (4—48—2) and Indra wins the cow-folds with the help of Vayu (4—21—4). So the association of Agni and Vayu is something more than a Nature myth.—The Rishis do not shrink from the burning heat of Agni, the Divine Will ; on the other hand, they wish to be sharpened by his keen flame. Cf. *tigmena nas tejasā sam śiśādhi*. 6—15—19.

V. CHANDRASEKHARAM

Sri Aurobindo—Poet of Yoga

Sri Aurobindo is always a call to spiritual adventure. To read his recent poetry is like walking on the edge of a precipice. One gets intoxicated with heights, one feels dizzy with depths, and it is with an effort that one manages to breathe the keen air and keep a clear head. A vision is lit, an experience takes shape, which are difficult to connect with the familiar contours of life. The critic, therefore, is liable to miss the true impact of this poetry, the right suggestion of each austere or colourful line. Most critics will go astray because the self-expression of a supreme Master of Yoga cannot be measured by the rules-of-thumb by which books of verse are reviewed, even religious or idealistic verse. Not that the criteria of poetry in general are inapplicable to it or that the religious or idealistic seeker will find no point of contact with its theme. Sri Aurobindo has chosen a form of art as his instrument and so it is as a poet no less than as a mystic that he should be judged. But his mysticism transcends the religious aim of giving mere mental and emotional "uplift" and the idealistic purpose of firing the imagination with far-away beauty. Sri Aurobindo writes of things he has actually seen and known: his poetry is the revealing word of realities that are supernormal to our mind but close and concrete to the subtle sense of the Yogi. To feel the power of such an inspiration we must bring an intense aesthesis free of old ideas and tempos, we must cultivate a profound sympathetic insight. Else we shall tack on labels that hang most oddly, pick out affinities and differences with a superficial eye and altogether shoot wide of the living soul, the passionate uniqueness of this work.

As if it were not enough to write from a range of experience beyond the common, Sri Aurobindo has turned his hand in nine out of these twelve poems to novel verse-forms. He has based his technique on a flexible modulation of classical

quantitative foot measures or on a combination of stress and foot striking a many-sided mean between free verse and traditional metre. There are short but instructive notes to one of the books ; their absence in the other makes somewhat of a *lacuna* for full technical appraisal. Luckily, it is not necessary to know the technique in detail for getting the *rasa* of the new movement. A driving force is felt in the expression which assures success in whatever novel pattern Sri Aurobindo chooses to cut. The poems have a pulse of their own and convey like an organic body their peculiar gait. Nothing is eked out with brain-labour to fit a preconceived framework ; the inspiration seems to be skilful by a luminous instinct taking liberties with the base and achieving a "happy valiancy" impossible to intellectual experiment. In fact, brain-labour is absent in the very nature of this poetry. Sri Aurobindo writes from centres of consciousness which Yogic practice discovers behind the mind in occult regions and above it in a sort of spiritual ether. This brings in, apart from the technical novelty, an unusual rhythm which is a rarer enchantment, a more momentous adventure than any new and fascinating form. Rhythm, in poetry, is not the mere harmonious arrangement of sounds ; it is sound suggesting the hidden life-throb of a thing as felt by a certain mode of consciousness. As long as the mode is one that is accessible to the majority of people every fresh sweep of poetic rhythm goes home to the heart. When an extraordinary mode comes into play, the aesthetic ear needs special tuning in order to catch the whole gamut.

Emily Dickinson, referring to the physical effect poetry had on her, says : " It is as if the top of my head were taken off ! " Her description applies most appropriately to Sri Aurobindo's work. The wind of his inspiration gives us the feeling that our brain-clamped mind has lost its limits and functions in a powerful immensity fraught with unfathomable suggestions. The rhythm fills out the meaning to a tense mystery breaking into a largeness of inner experience which is distinct both from the Classically Sublime and the Romantically Stupendous known to

poetry so far. We have a grandeur of sense and sound *sui generis*. Take the line:

Calm faces of the Gods on backgrounds vast.

The word-picture is of a steady watchful agelessness, but that is not all: the very life of that Super-Nature, that amplitude self-aware, is breathed into the long varying vowels and subtly alliterative consonants. Here is another instance:

My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight.

The actual process of the human enlarging itself into the Divine is conveyed both by the suggestive phrases and the rhythm with its leaping yet massive, vigorous yet poised movement of anapaests. Or consider a verse like

Crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned,
where what would otherwise be abstract springs into concrete-
ness because of the vitality of each accurate word, a vitality
echoing the very act of a high spiritual realisation, so deeply
and intimately does the whole line vibrate in our consciousness.

It is not easy to grasp the essential nature of this rhythm. Nothing short of constant brooding over such lines as I have quoted and intoning them to some inner ear can create the true response. All fine poetry must be lived with a long while for the entire bulk of beauty behind its first surprise to be assimilated; work like Sri Aurobindo's demands a keener concentration. Critical analysis will not be enough: we must more than understand, we must get hypnotically haunted, so to speak, until our outward-going faculties develop a supernormal perception. We have to grow both aesthetically and intuitively. To facilitate this growth we cannot do better than make a cult of the new inspiration by repeating and revolving within ourselves as often as possible that magnificent quatrain from *The Life Heavens* which gives the ideal at once of Sri Aurobindo's askesis and art, the aim of his Integral Yoga and an example of what the best spiritual poetry should be:

Arms taking to a voiceless supreme Delight—
Life that meets the Eternal with close breast—
An unwall'd mind dissolved in the Infinite—
Force one with unimaginable rest.

Here we have the Vedas and the Upanishads and the Gita in miraculous quintessence. No other poet has caught the overtones and undertones of the ancient Indian scriptures with the sustained potency that in these four lines turns the etherealities of religion and idealism an immediate and palpable greatness. Perhaps in their rarest flights Milton and Wordsworth have captured something similar, but there is in these verses by Sri Aurobindo a continuity, a completeness, an all-roundness, an exhaustive loftiest expression of the truth of our whole nature—our body, our vital and emotional being, our thought-urge, our will-energy—a foursquare triumph of the spiritual *Mantra* which arrests and satisfies us more than any accidental aspect of it in splendid isolation like

Those thoughts that wander through eternity
from *Paradise Lost* or that sudden

Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone—
which is itself a very lonely voyager through much watery verse
in *The Prelude*.

The *Mantra*! Whether scattered or built into a consistent pattern, it is the goal of mystical poetry. It occurs under special conditions in which the psychological standpoint of the writer undergoes a change. To speak eloquently of God's knowledge or His marvellous power is not necessarily to embody that power or that knowledge: everything depends on what "plane" of being has found expression. Every plane has its own voice, its own spontaneous manner of utterance. A vivid quivering nerve-poignancy and passion is Shakespeare, the plane of the Life Force *par excellence*. Milton is a less vibrant play with our guts but a more resounding impact on our grey cells, the plane of the Mind Force raised to its climax. Beyond these forces are other planes: there the basis of all experience is the Infinite and the Immortal—there a supreme Oneness underlying all diversity is the first fact of conscious existence—and consciousness there is not a logical or imaginative attempt to reconstruct truth but a direct entry into the essence of things: thought and its labour are no more, a swift blissful intuition radiates everywhere, with

an harmonious surge exceeding the poetic possibilities of our lesser light. If that expressive amplitude is permitted to take hold of our speech, we get a combination of sounds and a turn of phrase and a glow of insight which carry the inmost "feel" of those divine heights. The vision, the word, the vibration—all three must be intensities drawn from the Spirit's ether. But more even than the wide inwardness of the vision, the mighty yet intimate grip of the word, it is the rhythm that marks the *Mantra*, bearing as it does the precise thrill of a Consciousness which is everlasting and unlimited. Without such a thrill there would be just a distant glimpse of the Promised Land in admirable poetry of its own kind but no sensation of the Spirit's vastnesses as though they were within us. For that sensation and the concrete insight it brings, the mind must surrender its tongue to the luminous Beyond instead of essaying an imitation by means of its own heat and movement. To do this in any extensive measure calls for a patient and quiet aesthetic Yoga in tune with an actual practice of self-consecration to the Divine. Even then, what is achieved may not be the utter *Mantra*, for there are fine gradations, each a power of the Spirit and the sheer top is the mantric miracle. But Sri Aurobindo has again and again the breath of the sheer top. And when he descends, it is mainly to the other altitudes of Super-Nature: almost throughout the tones of the Overworld blow through his music.

An exceptional and unprecedented feat, this—but on being shown the new accent people blink and wonder what all the gorgeous frenzy is about. Unable to make much of its significance at the first blush they start comparing its language and its rhythm to those of older poets in order to arrive at some coign of vantage from which to get the right perspective. But, as I have indicated, the real affinities are such rare birds that the results of the comparison are generally ludicrous. Surface-impressions are accepted without the least endeavour to dig below them. If the lines lengthen out and a richness of colour is employed, the cry of "Swinburne!" is raised. The temper of the poem is not even touched, the metrical design is not

analysed. The fact that Sri Aurobindo has moulded novel metrical designs and royally filled them with inspiration adds, in the opinion of dilettante critics, a further resemblance to Swinburne the arch-metricist. Never a thought is spared for the basic distinctions between the various moulds or the expressive purposes to which they are put. What completes and crowns the huge confusion is that Sri Aurobindo's soar of mystical and spiritual vision beyond the range familiar to the imagination is taken to be a half-brother of Swinburne's frequent vagueness and tenuity of substance! Not invariably does Sri Aurobindo soar a little beyond our comprehension ; but whenever he tends to do so, there is no melodious thinness of thought, there is only a thrilled transcendence of thought by pure spiritual revelation. What, for instance, is decoratively inane in the pictorial profundity of a vision such as

Gold-white wings a throb in the vastness, the bird of flame
went glimmering over a sunfire curve to the haze of
the west,

Skimming, a messenger-sail, the sapphire-summer waste of a
soundless wayless burning sea—
or in the opulent symbolism charging the deep tone of this
passage about the same occult bird:

White-ray-jar of the spuming rose-red wine drawn from the
vats brimming with light-blaze, the vats of ecstasy,
Pressed by the sudden and violent feet of the Dancer in
Time from his sun-grape fruit of a deathless vine—
or, again, in the psychic tension as well as unearthly magic and
mystery of another glimpse from the bird-apocalypse:

Rich and red is thy breast, O bird, like blood of a soul
climbing the hard crag-teeth world, wounded and nude,
A ruby of flame-petalled love in the silver-gold altar-vase
of moon-edged night and rising day.

The least sensitiveness on our part to great occult verse is enough to convince us that we are in the presence of a reality belonging to other planes of being than the physical. The

inward vibrancy of an experience moving between some hidden heart of spirituality in us and some subtle ether above our mind is caught undeniably by the aesthetic sense, and when the whole poem is read we feel that sweep after sweep of an artist's brush has carried us in a multi-gestured scheme to a grand total out of the scope of articulate expression. *The Bird of Fire* is not a heaping up of half-vivid half-vague effects—it is one whole, and at the end there is no impression of an inadequate stammer. The light and leap of individual pictures come to a profound rest, a composed fullness packed with spiritual substance; only, the substance cannot be altogether grasped by the understanding. All poetry has an unresolved surplus, something that defies mental analysis, a suggestive aura beyond words. Mystical poetry lifts this surplus to its largest intensity: the failure, therefore, of the understanding to cope with the strange details and the stranger *ensemble* does not measure the incompetence of the mystic's art. The sole question we have to put is: Has the poetry everywhere a breath of life and does that breath form a harmony satisfying some intuitive awareness within us?

What strengthens our feeling of a harmony in each poem by Sri Aurobindo is the firm unfaltering manner in which the lines grow. No weakness, no hurry—but a sure and moulded progression even in the midst of speed; there is no myopic peering into mists nor an embranglement among depths as though his mind were alien to them. Sri Aurobindo moves like a master through the Unknown, with a grip on all that he describes: the poetry has an objective three-dimensional air as if the Spirit were neither an abstraction nor a far-floating haze but something to be seen and touched. The peculiarity, however, is that the universe in which Sri Aurobindo sees and touches reality is held in a wideness of being that is his own self—the objective and the subjective are a single strangeness. The impression that harmonious worlds of light are his theme and that he possesses whatever he wants to manifest and does not fumble for it distinguishes his poetry at its most puzzling from the discords and chaotic fantasies of the Surrealist School.

The surrealist stumbles through a world of jostling phantasms, chunks of colour and imagery laid on one another as in a nightmare. All kinds of wayward combinations are projected and there is an amorphous look about the entire mass. Sri Aurobindo is always the artist seer, the shaper building beauty out of a spaciousness lit up within him. The seeing eye and the shaping hand are evident whether he writes quantitative trimeters with a broad clarity of stroke as in the first half of *Shiva*—

A face on the dire cold mountain peaks
 Grand and still ; its lines white and austere
 Match with the unmeasured snowy streaks
 Cutting heaven, implacable and sheer.
 Above it a mountain of matted hair
 Aeon-coiled on that deathless and lone head
 In its solitude huge of lifeless air
 Round, above illimitably spread.
 A moon ray on the forehead, blue and pale,
 Stretched afar its finger of strange light
 Illumining emptiness. Stern and male
 Mask of peace indifferent in might! —

or colour and splendour are drawn from realms of the occult as in *Rose of God* where a famous symbol is steeped in the most intense spiritual light possible and lifted on a metrical base of pure stress into an atmosphere of rapt incantation. Each poem of Sri Aurobindo's must be read with a slow full voice in order to get its true rhythmic value: not indeed a dreamy drawl but an intensity that is controlled and deep-vowelling. Read thus, with the mind held quiet and receptive, Sri Aurobindo wafts to us in this apostrophe the breath of an unforgettable experience:

Rose of God, vermilion stain on the sapphires of heaven,
 Rose of Bliss, fire-sweet, seven-tinged with the ecstasies seven!
 Leap up in our heart of humanhood, O miracle, O flame,
 Passion-flower of the Nameless, bud of the mystical Name.

Rose of God, great wisdom-bloom on the summits of being,
 Rose of Light, immaculate core of the ultimate seeing!
 Live in the mind of our earthhood: O golden Mystery,
 flower,
 Sun on the head of the Timeless, guest of the marvellous
 Hour.

Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,
 Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night!
 Ablaze in the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy
 plan,
 Image of Immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man.

Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,
 Rose of Life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre!
 Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical
 rhyme;
 Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the
 Children of Time.

Rose of God, like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,
 Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace!
 Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's
 abyss:
 Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life Beatitude's
 kiss.

This is not decorative art, splashing oriental hues and luxuriating in exotic effects for their own sake. Every phrase is plucked from the gorgeous heart of a spiritual ecstasy, every word is dyed in the life-blood of genuine mysticism. Nor is there anything haphazard, a welter of vividnesses. A balance is retained in the midst of intoxication and step by step the rapture is explored. Esoteric, no doubt, some of the expressions are, but they come to us like the actual sight of unknown yet undeniable objects. They are esoteric as the amazing actuality of the Aurora Borealis may be called esoteric when viewed by a traveller from southern latitudes to North Cape. What is more, we feel that the lights in the poem are a burst of secret signifi-

cance—the vibrant imagery wakes in us an intuition of glorious purposes at work. To miss the sense of a divine reality that is borne on the profoundly moving language and rhythm and to say that we are face to face with abstractions covered by ornate phraseology is to be deaf and blind and numb.

The Infinite, the Eternal, the Divine—these are not in mystical poetry philosophical abstractions. A certain philosophical air is bound to cling at times to whatever deals with things so remote from our day-to-day concerns. But it is only the most superficial who will assert that Sri Aurobindo has juggled with mere ideas and rendered them attractive with the help of images. Words like “vastness”, “immensity”, “timeless”, “illimitable” and their equivalents scattered throughout his poetry do not stamp it as an intellectual exercise. Such words are an aid to the art that seeks to embody Yogic states of consciousness. Apart from monotony, the pitfall to avoid is insincerity and rhetoric—the hollow Hugoesque shout. In poetry that is deeply felt, these so-called abstractions live in the inner being, they create a sort of powerful subjective space—for vision to fill and illuminate. Vision—the seizing of actual presences and their interplay, the contacting of the shape and tint of hidden realities—turns Sri Aurobindo’s work to a revelatory process. But to appreciate the revelation, one must keep in mind that Sri Aurobindo is treading the domain of the superhuman, the ultra-natural, and his aim is not to humanise and naturalise them altogether. Indeed poetry of a fine order is possible to a completely humanised and naturalised mysticism as in the lyrics of the Vaishnava devotees, yet such verse is not the sole *genre* nor the acme of spiritual expression. A thing that is not of earth becomes more authentic and vivid if viewed in its own native atmosphere and setting than if tamed to the needs of the outer eye and the established habits of the poetic imagination. Sri Aurobindo, however, does not indulge in fantasy: a fidelity to mystical fact constitutes his “strangeness”. Nor is mystical fact cold and ghostly. In the atmosphere and setting of the Beyond we do not meet a passionless pageant of

strange forms on the verge of dissolving into a void. All human emotions are carried up, stripped of their brief pleasures and small pains, kindled into what the old Rishis called *Ananda* and rested in a supreme single-lustred fullness or made to clasp the contents of a beatific cosmos. Poems like *Jivanmukta*, *Nirvana* and *Thought the Paraclete* which manifest superhuman states are not frigid—they burn in an aura of beatitude. They are the music of sovereign God-realisation, not of aching and thwarted desire for the Infinite. Feeling, passion, emotion—all are there, but in a massive, harmonious, full-flowered intensity—they are not slashed and smitten to tuneful shreds.

Variously the genius of Sri Aurobindo brings home that intense height and breadth. A style not confined to one formula of symbolisation but cast into a changing chiaroscuro makes the two booklets of his recent poetry a many-faceted pointer to a new art fulfilling what is at present a dim tendency in the race-mind. Not always is Sri Aurobindo the esoteric artist: he can also conjure up a picture whose significance is caught by us immediately—

...Poised on the unreachable abrupt snow-solitary ascent
Earth aspiring lifts to the illimitable Light, then ceases
broken and spent.

But we are moved quite as much by more mysterious figurations:

...The dragon tail aglow of the faint night
brings us the sense of a power stretched gigantically in the darkness and laying on our minds a living touch through the swirl of stars. The sheer occult confronts us when Sri Aurobindo speaks of Shiva's creative force stirring within the core of Spirit merged in unconscious Matter:

In that diamond heart the fires undrape.

The finality of each word burns itself into the memory. "Undrape", with its hint of processes at once revelatory and creative, could not be bettered. The epithet "diamond" too is

worth noting for its double felicity: not only is it true to the inner sight to which the Divine's will is a tremendous white lustre just as the Divine's knowledge is a gold blaze and the Divine's love a crimson flare—it is also extraordinarily apt when the Spirit concealed in Matter is visioned, a presence holding material rigidity in a precious and transfigured form, a supreme strength dense with light and beauty. An equal art is employed in a different manner where the hint is of an absolute leap of the soul beyond the narrow paradises that often side-track the Yogi's passage through the inner planes:

My consciousness climbed like a topless hill.

The line suggests vividly a straight ascension that never comes to a culminating point because what it explores is the Infinite unfolding vista after vista. The suggestion is unlike religious or metaphysical poetry of the past by being couched in a language and a rhythm that somehow impart a direct intimate sense of the Ultra-natural. Whatever the style, this intimate directness is everywhere brought to us by Sri Aurobindo. But it is at its most effective when it carries those large unfathomable reverberations which rise into the *Mantra* and which he calls “overhead” because the afflatus then is a power felt in Yogic experience to be descending from above the mind-level in the brain.

The “overhead” afflatus is, among all inspirations, the most genuinely progressive: it is the sign of the next stage in our psychological evolution. It is like a message out of a future in which man's mind will not only plunge inward to his true psyche and from that spontaneous centre of light deepen into a majesty and a magnitude which is the secret Self of all things but also open upward to colossal powers of consciousness, a dynamic divinity taking up all our members and pouring into them the richest possible fulfilment of earth-existence. Strengthened by such a Yoga, poetry will no longer strain towards the Eternal in half-lit figures and a speech that carries a mere moiety of the Spirit's life-transmuting rhythm. Not that the new art will throw the achievement of past ages into the shade: poetic

excellence can be attained by the atheism of a Lucretius as well as by the Aurobindonian God-realisation, and nobody will ever outstrip Shakespeare and Homer and Valmiki. But a new region of reality will be laid bare, untrodden expressive paths penetrated. While the former ages gave us something of the world's wonder as seized by the body-sense, the life-gusto, the mental aesthesis, there will be found in the future a poetic word equal to Valmiki and Homer and Shakespeare but packed with a superhuman awareness which is man's profoundest though as yet unrevealed truth of being and the archetype of his body, his vital force and his mind. Mystical verse can be written from any inner level—a contact with the Superhuman can be made when one goes anywhere below the surface; still, the inspiration that has the amplest and closest grip on the Divine is the "overhead". In Sri Aurobindo the "overhead" breath is seldom absent: at times it is just a touch upon more familiar strata of harmony—oftener it is a full sweep clearing

Channels of rapture opal and hyaline
For the influx of the Unknown and the Supreme.

His twelve recent poems, therefore, are a remarkable step forward in the realm of Art. Among his own performances, they are a royal prelude of short span to the epic on which he is famed to be at work—*Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*—the epic which will carry to its highest tempo and sustain at the greatest and most diverse length the type of poetry that the world's master-singers before Sri Aurobindo's day have created in a few rare moments.

K. D. SETHNA

The Master as I see Him

It is not for the first time, in this life, that I see my Master. From age to age, through lives innumerable, have I known him and loved him and served him. As father, as lover, as friend, has he appeared unto me, again and again, and blessed my otherwise purposeless journeys on this planet. Now and then, clouds have obscured my vision, and I have failed to recognise my pole-star, but this has never been for long. Never has he, in his infinite compassion, forsaken me, a weak half-blind and insignificant creature pursuing his solitary path of self-seeking. His Shakti has lifted me out of the mire, led me out of the gloom, and taught me the art of seeking him, of seeing him, not in a heaven above, but in this ever-changing universe that surrounds me. Thus have I tasted of his grace, thus have I had glimpses of the Truth, again and again. I have my lapses into the semi-obscurity of my mental horizon. But these trouble me no longer, for has not the Master shown me the radiant face of the Sun of suns!

In fact, my mortal body and life and mind are ceasing to be a burden to me, for I know now that they are but the abode of my true and immortal Self. And my true Self, it is the Self of all, it is my Master's Self, it is the one Self in the universe and beyond. This body then, this life, this mind, is to me, not a prison as the illusionist wails, but the tabernacle of Him, the One without a second, the One that has become Many in his own infinite self-delight.

Lest I forget this, Oh Sovereign Lord! Thou hast appeared unto me in Thy dual personality, Purusha and Prakriti, Master and Mother, with Thy message of peace, peace over all the earth, and oneness of all with Thy eternal Self.

Long, very long, has man remained forgetful of his luminous self and his bright destiny. He has lost sight of the

radiant gem in the lotus of his heart, and has been travelling along the devious paths of egoism, preying on his fellows and living on his environment. Messengers from on high have appeared, from time to time, to remind him of his true nature. He has listened to them for the while, but has, alas! forgotten it all again. Inspired individuals have come and achieved their own liberation and passed away. But the bondage of the world has continued. Nature has her own strides in the path of evolution, she will not be hustled.

Man, however, is her cherished product. It is through him, through her favourite child, that her evolution has to proceed. In the Master's words, the individual is the key of evolution. Starting as a speck of cosmic dust he has stage by stage progressed through the ages, arriving finally at manhood. Then began his serious trials. He did not mind. Through tangled forest and over arid plains, across mighty rivers and over lofty mountains, in fair weather and foul, he travelled, but ever going forward. Today a terrible tempest, a blinding blizzard, has overtaken him as he is struggling along in a deep morass, the deepest bog he has had to negotiate so far. He is up to his neck in group egoism, power lust and blood lust.

Yet, man can get through if he wills it, if he realises the divinity in himself. For it is only by the light of the gem within that he can see his way. He may choose to persist in his ignorance and leave his bones to rot in the slime of the marsh. He has the right to choose, for has he not been endowed with reason and intelligence! But in any case he cannot stop nature's evolution. If he drops out of it, nature will choose another medium. This is the Master's solemn warning.

"Unless therefore the race is to fall by the wayside and leave the victory to other and new creations of the eager travailing Mother, it must aspire to this ascent, conducted indeed through love, mental illumination and the vital urge to possession and self-giving, but leading beyond to the supramental unity which transcends and fulfils them."

This warning does not trouble me, so sure am I of His love, of His infinite compassion. He will not allow man to perish by the roadside. Krishna's assurance to Arjun in the Gita was,

"For whensoever there is the fading of the Dharma and the uprising of unrighteousness, then I loose myself forth into birth. For the deliverance of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the enthroning of the Right, I am born from age to age."

Such crises however have always a spiritual seed or intention. Merely for an outward action, however great, the special manifestation of an avatar is not needed. Even such epoch-making events as the Reformation in Europe or the Revolution in France required a change in the general consciousness that was merely mental and dynamic, not spiritual, and consequently did not require the direct guidance of Divinity incarnate.

Before the battle of Kurukshetra a crisis with a deep spiritual significance had undoubtedly come upon India, and the Lord out of his immeasurable love for humanity came down to the earth, destroyed the wicked, delivered the good and established the kingdom of righteousness. Today, the crisis that has overtaken humanity is an infinitely more serious one. It seems as if all that man has achieved so far has gone into the melting pot. His ideals, his standards, his sense of values, everything appears to have gone awry. Unrighteousness is rampant and Dharma is fading away. The moment is propitious for the descent of the Lord, and He has so descended. Blessed are they that have bowed down at His feet!

Such is the Master I seek to serve. He has not yet declared Himself. He has not yet said,—The ignorant and the deluded do not recognise me in my human guise, they do not know me as the great Lord of all existences. But it matters not. Those eyes, what do they show but ineffable peace and supreme bliss! That face, every line of it indicates almighty might and infinite compassion! Through the transparent frame shines soft yet

THE MASTER AS I SEE HIM

bright the Divine light of the One Eternal that transcends both Knowledge and Ignorance, both Heaven and Earth.

Lord, Thou hast, I know, come down to destroy the evil-doer and to deliver the righteous. But very much more hast Thou come down to show me what I can rise to become, to demonstrate to me that the humblest of men can become God in his terrestrial body. Thy descent into humanity will raise man into the Godhead. Thy descent is my ascent.

Such is the full significance of the Master's advent. May a distracted world realise this, and with the completest submission to Him take boldly the leap upward into the region of the Supermind.

C. C. DUTT

Sir Akbar Hydari's Visit to Pathamandir

The late Sir Akbar Hydari, who was Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, during his last visit to Calcutta, paid a visit to Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir on the evening of the 19th December, 1941, and in the course of a short speech spoke on the Ideal of Sri Aurobindo's *sadhana*. This was Sir Akbar's last speech.

On behalf of the members of the Pathamandir, Professor Haridas Chaudhuri spoke on Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and gave an account of the activities of the institution.

Sir Akbar heartily thanked Prof. Chaudhuri for the lucid exposition of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and the members of the institution for the cordial reception accorded to him. He said that he had no intention of speaking but in that atmosphere he felt the urge to say something on the need of spirituality.

'The world in spite of its material progress was yet groping in the dark, he said. There had been spiritual culture from ages past, but man had not thoroughly grasped the value of spirituality in worldly affairs. He stressed on the need of spirituality even in practical life. When a new world would be forged after the present war, he said, a spiritual background would be an essential factor—more essential than pacts and treaties.

In this light should be assessed the value of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, which showed the path to the distracted humanity, said he. He hoped that its proper value would be assessed in years to come.



Sir Akbar Hydari addressing the members of the Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir

SIR AKBAR'S VISIT TO PATHAMANDIR

Sir Akbar expressed great satisfaction that Sri Aurobindo's philosophy was being earnestly studied by a group.

Sir Akbar then inspected the Library and bade adieu to the members and the assembly. A flashlight photo was taken when Sir Akbar was speaking.

The Late Sir Francis Younghusband on Sri Aurobindo's

"The Life Divine"

"I really do quite genuinely consider it the greatest book which has been produced in my time and I have learned some very valuable things from it which I would much like to have known of before—all the arguments for re-birth for instance. Then all he has said about the different planes of existence has greatly interested me. In my two books "Life in the Stars" and "The Living Universe" I have written much on life on other planets of other stars and on some of the inhabitants being on a higher level of being than we are. But I had not then realised all that I have now learned from "The Life Divine."

"This war has been a terrible catastrophe and we here in London suffered badly. I have been all through it and helped in Air Raid Precautions. But bad as it is the calamity has had one good effect ; it has turned men's minds to God. Men realise now the value of religion as they never did before. And "The Life Divine" could not have appeared at a more opportune moment. Some time must elapse before its importance can be appreciated. Then slowly and surely it will make its influence felt."

(From a letter from London, of December 17, 1941,
to Dilipkumar Roy.)

SRI AUROBINDO'S

COLLECTED POEMS AND PLAYS

In these two volumes are collected all the poetical works of Sri Aurobindo that have been published in book-form or as isolated pieces or serially in periodicals. The Appendix contains sixteen poems newly composed by Sri Aurobindo illustrating the possibilities of new English metres and rhythms apt to give genuine poetic expression to highest thoughts and spiritual experiences.

This collected edition is now published to commemorate the 70th birth-day of Sri Aurobindo which falls on August 15, 1942. The work here presented is only a small portion of what he has actually written, the bulk of which has not yet seen the light of day. Yet it is hoped that even this fragment will serve to give an idea of the poetic genius that seeks expression in it. Sri Aurobindo once said that he had been first and foremost a poet and a politician, only later he became a Yogi. We can safely amend the statement by saying that even before he became a politician he had been a poet, indeed he was born as a poet and he is a born poet. This aspect of Sri Aurobindo is not, at least has not been, so well-known except in a small select circle; we trust that the wider literary public will now have an opportunity to taste of a genuine Pierian spring here disclosed to broad daylight.

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